Sūrah al-Rūm

Central Theme and Relation with Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the previous *sūrah*: al-'Ankabūt. Both have the same Qur'ānic name: Alif Lām Mīm. For this reason, there is not much difference in the central themes of the two. In the previous sūrah, in spite of the apparent trying circumstances, Muslims are given glad tidings of divine help and supremacy. These glad tiding are based on the foundation that this universe has been created by the Almighty with a purpose; He is the one and only and all things are under His control; He will grant supremacy in this world to His messenger and his companions; after this world, there will be a Hereafter too where God's perfect justice will manifest itself and evil will be totally vanquished and those who adhered to the truth will enter into an eternal kingdom.

The above mentioned issues were under discussion between the Muslims and the Idolaters when in their neighbourhood in 614 AD the Magians attacked the Roman occupied lands of Syria and Palestine and expelled them from there. Since the Romans were Christians and hence closer to Muslims with regard to their religion, Muslims had a natural sympathy for them. On the contrary, the Magians were polytheists and hence all the sympathies of the Idolaters of Arabia lied with them. The defeat of the Romans by the Magians greatly boosted the confidence of these Idolaters. On its basis, they started to make fun of all the directives of the Qur'ān which were against their desires. For example, the belief of the Muslims that the religion of monotheism alone is the correct religion or that Muslims will triumph or that the Day of Judgement will come in which the truth will reign supreme. The Idolaters would contend that all these notions of the Muslims are baseless; had they been true, how could the Magians have triumphed over the Romans? They concluded that this event clearly showed that their religion and viewpoint was correct and that they would remain supreme and continue to rule.

Through this event, the Qur'ān has once again delineated the facts which the Idolaters had cast doubt upon.

In order to understand the coherence of this *sūrah*, though this background

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is sufficient, yet for the convenience of the readers, the analysis of the *sūrah* discourse is also present below.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-7): A brief reference is made to this victory of the Magians over the Romans and it is stated that the rise and fall of nations in this world are not incidental happenings. They occur on the basis of an established practice of the Almighty which is based on justice. However, people who have a superficial outlook of this world are not able to grasp this established practice.

Verses (8-18): Any person who reflects on the system of this world and its history will confess that its creator has not created it as a place of amusement and entertainment. Hence, it will necessarily culminate on a day of reward and punishment. Also evident from the history of nations is that God has dealt with them according to their character. Thus, the Hereafter is bound to come. Those who deny it deny an obvious reality. When it arrives, the believers will succeed and the disbelievers will end up as losers. Those who have fabricated partners of God and other deities are living on false support. On the Day of Judgement, these intercessors will prove to be of no worth. Only God is worthy of worship and obedience. Every object of this universe is singing his praises and glorifying Him. For this reason, it is the duty of human beings as well to glorify Him by night and day.

Verses (19-29): Arguments drawn from the world inside man and the one external to him are proffered to substantiate the beliefs of monotheism and the hereafter.

Verses (30-45): It is emphasized upon the Prophet (sws) to adhere to the religion corroborated by human nature and to invite others towards it. This religion is based on the institutions of the prayer and the *zakāh*. Those who have perverted this religion are admonished that the time of their accountability has drawn near. They should learn a lesson from the fate of previous nations. The Prophet (sws) is assured that he should keep doing his task with perseverance and wait for God's verdict.

Verses (46-60): Reference is given to historical arguments that substantiate the promise of God's help to the believers. The Prophet (sws) is assured that his message can touch the hearts of those people only who have intellect. So he should not be be disheartened by the attitude of those who have become deaf and blind. The Qur'ān is sufficient for those who have intellect. As far as the stubborn and the obdurate are concerned, not even a miracle can convince them. The Prophet (sws) should persist with his task with perseverance and wait for God's promise of divine help to be fulfilled.

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ غُلِبَتِ الرُّوْمُ ﴿٢﴾ فِيْٓ اَدْنَى الْاَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ فِيْ بِضْعِ سِنِيْنَ ؕ لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ
مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدُ ؕ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ بِنَصْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٥﴾
وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَهُمْ
عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا
بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَانُوْٓا اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاَثَارُوا الْاَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوْهَآ اَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوْهَا وَ
جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ؕ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِيْنَ
اَسَآءُوا السُّوْٓاٰى اَنْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ اَللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ
تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآئِهِمْ شُفَعٰٓؤُا وَكَانُوْا
بِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَهُمْ
فِيْ رَوْضَةٍ يُّحْبَرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآئِ الْاٰخِرَةِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾
فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

This is *Alif lām mīm*. The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land, and soon after their defeat – in a few years – they will be victorious. What happened earlier was on account of God's directive and what will happen later will be because of God's directive, and at that time the believers shall be pleased. With God's help. He helps whomsoever He intends and only He is powerful and merciful This is a definite promise of God and God never breaks His promises. But most people know not. They only know the outward aspect of the life of this world, and are totally heedless of the Hereafter. (1-7)

Have they not pondered on their hearts! God has created the heavens and the earth and what is between them with purpose and wisdom till an appointed time. And there are many among people who deny meeting their Lord. (8)

Have they not journeyed through the land to see the fate of those before them? They were more powerful and better than them in making the land fertile and in populating it and to them their messengers came with veritable signs. Thus God was not unjust to them; they themselves were unjust to their souls. Then evil was the fate of these who adopted the wrong attitude because they denied God's revelations and made fun of them. (9-10)

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It is God Who initiates creation. Then He will repeat this again. After that, you will return to Him. And the day when the Hereafter arrives, the wrongdoers will lose hope and no one from their partners with God will intercede for them and they will deny their partners with God. (11-13)

The day when the Hereafter arrives, the believers and the disbelievers will be separated. Thus those who professed faith and did good deeds will rejoice in a beautiful orchard. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations and the meeting of the Hereafter will be seized in torment. Therefore, glorify God when you enter evening and when you enter morning and praises are being sung to Him in the heavens and the earth and at the time of *'ishā* also and also at the time when you enter *ẓuhr*. (14-18)

Explanation

الٓمٓ ۝١[1]

The expression الٓمٓ is a complete sentence as I have explained at various instances of this exegesis ie. "The implied construction is Sūrah Alif Lām Mīm." This is the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah*. The previous *sūrah* also bears this name. This is an indication of the fact that there is not much difference in the central themes of both *sūrahs*. In the previous *sūrah*, the philosophy on which this universe is created and as its necessary consequence the glad tidings of divine help and dominance to the messenger of God were given. In this *sūrah*, the disbelievers while referring to an incident made a lot of fun of this claim of divine help and dominance. They thought that in the form of this incident they had such evidence to reject the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) that made them rejoice. Quite naturally this caused sorrow to the Muslims. The Qur'ān, while citing this incident at the beginning of this *sūrah*, has explained all the aspects of this incident whose lack of knowledge had led the disbelievers to this misconception. Also since these aspects were not fully clear, a group of Muslims too was inflicted with doubt. In this way, this *sūrah*, substantiates and highlights the content of the previous one, and also refutes all doubts that arose or could arise in this regard. In other words, the subject under discussion in both *sūrahs* is the same. The only difference is of nature and style of reasoning. In both *sūrahs*, the veracity of Muḥammad (sws)'s prophethood is delineated on the basis of the principles presented by him.

غُلِبَتِ الرُّوْمُ ۝٢ فِيْٓ اَدْنَى الْاَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ ۝٣ فِيْ بِضْعِ سِنِيْنَ ۭ لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْۢ

1. This is *Alif lām mīm*.

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بَعْدُ ؕ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴﴾[2]

The expression اَدْنَى الْاَرْضِ refers to Syria and Palestine which were immediately adjacent to Arabia. At that time, the Romans ruled that area but they were involved in severe internal strife. Taking advantage of this situation, the Persians attacked them and dislodged them from these areas. This incident took place in 614 AD. In other words, it happened in the sixth or seventh year of prophethood of Muḥammad (sws).

In the sentence وَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ the word غَلَبٌ is annexed to its object (*maf'ūl*). In other words, the Qur'ān has predicted that though the Romans have been defeated yet this defeat is temporary; very soon they will be victorious over the Persians.

The words فِيْ بِضْعِ سِنِيْنَ refer to the fact that the change of situation which the Qur'ān is informing them of will not take long. Only in a few years it will materialize. Though the word سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ already had the meaning of a near future in it yet it did have a ring of vagueness. In order to remove this vagueness, it is qualified by the words فِيْ بِضْعِ سِنِيْنَ. This made it evident that this revolution will spring before the next decade is over. The word بِضْعٌ does not apply to a number greater than ten. The need for this definite determination was because the Idolaters had presented this incident in support of the truthfulness of their thought and philosophy, as is referred to earlier. This had naturally hurt the Muslims. Through this emphatic prediction, the Qur'ān, on the one hand, has assured Muslims that the happiness of the disbelievers in regarding this incident to be in their support will be short lived and soon it will turn into sorrow; on the other hand, it has presented this incident to be a barometer for the truthfulness of Muḥammad's (sws) prophethood. It is evident from history that nine years after this incident Heraclius re-organized the Romans afresh and defeated the Persians and not only reclaimed many of their territories, he even conquered many of their lands. In this way, this prediction of the Qur'ān was fulfilled word for word.

The words لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدُ refer to the fact that whatever happened was on God's command and whatever will happen in the future will also happen at God's behest. Such great incidents in the life of nations do not take place by chance; they take place because of God's directive, and every directive of God is based on truth and justice. When the Romans became incriminated

2. The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land, and soon after their defeat – in a few years – they will be victorious. What happened earlier was on account of God's directive and what will happen later will be because of God's directive, and at that time the believers shall be pleased. With God's help.

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with the wrongdoings that entitle a person to God's wrath they could not save themselves merely on the basis that some of their beliefs and rituals were good. It is not merely beliefs and rituals which are primarily beneficial or harmful for the collective life of a nation; the real thing is the individual and collective character which emanates from these beliefs and rituals or should emanate from them. If such a character is not the result, then such hollow rituals are of no use. It was this very hollowness of the Romans which was the cause of their defeat before the Persians. Now the glad tidings which are being given of their victory over the Persians in the near future which will take place because of God's command and each command of God is based on truth and justice. Hence, the Romans will necessarily triumph and after reforming their ways will become eligible to God's help against the Persians.

The words وَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ state that on that day Muslims will rejoice. Not only because those who are closer to them in religion and ideology will be victorious but also because a great prediction of the Qur'ān in favour of the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) will be fulfilled.

This aspect is worthy of attention that even though the Romans were not true followers of Christianity and their beliefs and deeds had become incriminated with many flaws, Muslims still were more sympathetic towards them against the Romans. The Almighty even praised this sympathy. It is on this principle that Islam has based its law and dealings with other non-Muslim nations. In other words, the more a nation is closer to Islam in its beliefs, deeds and ideology the more sympathetic Muslims will feel towards it in the international arena.

بِنَصْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝[3]

The words بِنَصْرِ اللّٰهِ can be connected to سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ or to يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ. In this first case, the meaning will be that the dominance they will achieve will be because of God's help; none other than Him can help anyone. It should remain in consideration that the will of God is based on truth and justice and hence He does not help those who are not worthy of it as per truth and justice. The reference to His attributes of power and mercy are meant to express the nature of His will. Since He is powerful, no one can stop Him in implementing His will and since He is merciful, every will of His is based on justice and mercy. His will never induces Him to entertain Himself by pitting one nation against another.

3. He helps whomsoever He intends and only He is powerful and merciful.

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وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾[4]

The word وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ here is an emphasized participle (*maṣdar mu'akkad*). For this reason, it will have the meaning of emphasis incorporated in it. In other words, this promise of God's help is absolutely certain to materialize for the believers. God will never breach His promise yet those who can only see the apparent and cannot see His invisible hand which is behind this apparent will not understand this. The fulfillment of promise mentioned here does not merely refer to the triumph of the Romans but also refers to the triumph of the Prophet (sws) and His companions that was refuted by the Quraysh on the basis of the victory of the Persians. After commenting on this incident, the Qur'ān has stated with great emphasis that it will be fulfilled – something which is primarily mentioned in this *sūrah*. In verses 47 and 60 ahead, it will be further explained.

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾[5]

The reasons that has made certain people slaves to the apparent as mentioned in the previous verse are alluded to: these people only have a superficial outlook of this world and are not able to delve behind the apparent in order to see who the real being is who controls everything and what His attributes are. For this reason, they regard this world to be a place of amusement. The second reason is that they are totally oblivious to the Hereafter. If they are heedless to the Hereafter, then without it this universe can in no way be regarded to be based on justice and mercy.

In the expression وَ هُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ, the repetition of the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) evidences the fact that the Qur'ān wants to emphasize that it is these people who are actually heedless of the Hereafter. The reason for this emphasis is that the Idolaters of Arabia would not openly refute the Hereafter; yet they had fabricated such a system of intercession and polytheism that the Hereafter had become a totally meaningless thing for them. The Qur'ān wants to point out here that no one should think that these people acknowledge the Hereafter in any respect. The fact is that these people are totally heedless of it.

اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَاۤ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا

4. This is a definite promise of God and God never breaks His promises. But most people know not.

5. They only know the outward aspect of the life of this world, and are totally heedless of the Hereafter.

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مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝٨[6]

This and some of the succeeding verses further corroborate what is said in the previous verse. The arguments are drawn from the world around man. If these people had reflected from within their hearts, it would have become evident to them that God has not created the heavens and the earth and that between them without any purpose merely as a means of amusement. On the contrary, everything has been created for a purpose and will exist till a specific time period. So when everything has been created with a purpose and is also tied to a time period of existence, how can it be thought that human beings, who are clearly a superior creation of God, have been created without a purpose? This entails that a day come wherein human beings are held accountable for their deeds: if a person has done good deeds, he should be rewarded and if he has done evil deeds, he should suffer punishment for them. If this does not happen, it would mean that this universe is merely a place of entertainment and amusement and that human beings have been created with any purpose and will not be brought to account. This obviously is against the purposeful nature of this universe to which every object testifies. In Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, precisely this topic is discussed thus: وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (٣: ١٩٠ ١٩١) (And reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth and declare: “Lord! You have not created this without a purpose. Glory be to You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.” (3:190-191).

The opening words اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ of the verse under discussion highlight that this wisdom in the creation of the heavens and the earth becomes evident to only those people who delve deep into their own selves and intend to know the real truth. As for those who blindly follow others or demand miracles and signs to deny the truth and are always ready to indulge in confrontational dialogue, they remain deprived of the truth.

The words وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُوْنَ imply that this fact is absolutely evident but many of the foolish still think that they have been made to enjoy the luxuries of life and one day they will perish in this manner. They will never have to face any day of accountability in future.

اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَانُوْٓا اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاَثَارُوا الْاَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوْهَآ اَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوْهَا وَجَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ؕ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ۝٩

6. Have they not pondered on their hearts! God has created the heavens and the earth and what is between them with purpose and wisdom till an appointed time. And there are many among people who deny meeting their Lord.

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ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَآءُوا السُّوْٓاٰى اَنْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ كَانُوْا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾[7]

These verses substantiate the above stated premise through historical arguments: had these people reflected on the signs and history of their area, they would have seen the fate reached by nations who were mightier than they and more adept in cultural and creative prowess. The reference is to the nations of ‘Ād, the Thamūd and Madyan etc whose anecdotes have been mentioned in detail in the previous *sūrahs*. It is stated that their respective messengers came to them with clear signs but they shut their eyes in such a manner that no sign should be able to open them. The consequence of this was that God seized them in punishment and this was no act of injustice from God. They themselves were responsible for being unjust to their souls because they did not give due regard to the warning God gave to them. On the contrary, they denied the revelations of God and were audacious enough to make fun of them. The implication is that the Quraysh should reflect on the history of nations and think what they testify to. Do they testify that this world is a place which goes on unchecked and that a person may do whatever he like so that no one is there to stop him? Or do they they testify that God has always dealt with nations in accordance with His laws based on justice and wisdom? Obviously, it is this second case. It further emanates from it that a day will come in which God will hold each individual accountable and reward or punish him according to his deeds.

اَللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾[8]

In the previous verses, it is shown that this universe has been made with a purpose, the law of retribution found in it is a certain truth. Now in this and the succeeding verses, in very clear words the reality is highlighted which everyone will have to face. The verse states that it is God Who begins creation and it is He alone He Who will recreate. Found in these few words are both the claim and the evidence to this claim. The claim is that God will recreate. The evidence to this is that it is He Who began the creation. Obviously, he who began creation and did not encounter any difficulty in it

7. Have they not journeyed through the land to see the fate of those before them? They were more powerful and better than them in making the land fertile and in populating it and to them their messengers came with veritable signs. Thus God was not unjust to them; they themselves were unjust to their souls. Then evil was the fate of these who adopted the wrong attitude because they denied God’s revelations and made fun of them.

8. It is God Who initiates creation. Then He will repeat this again, After that, you will return to Him.

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will not face any difficulty when he takes up this task again. In fact, repeating a task is easier than doing it for the first time. This is the answer to the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement: they regard it to be a far-fetched event whereas if the first creation was not far-fetched how can recreating be something far-fetched.

The words ثُمَّ اِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ dispel the second misconception of the disbelievers. In the first place, they regarded the Hereafter to be unlikely and if they did believe in it hypothetically, they reckoned that they will return to their deities. These deities were favoured by God in their view and such is the favour they hold with Him that they will not allow God to punish them and if He does intend to punish them these deities will save them through their intercession. The verse states that they should do away with this foolish notion. Every one will return to God alone and no one else on that day will be there to which they will return.

وَيَوۡمَ تَقُوۡمُ السَّاعَةُ يُبۡلِسُ الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَلَمۡ يَكُنۡ لَّهُمۡ مِّنۡ شُرَكَآئِهِمۡ شُفَعٰٓؤُا وَكَانُوۡا بِشُرَكَآئِهِمۡ كٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ [9]

The word ابلاس means to lose hope and be bewildered. The verses state that these adversaries who today are relying on the support of their deities will become hopeless and wordless when on the Day of Judgement the real picture comes before their eyes. They will see that none of those whom they associated with God and whom they worshipped all their lives will be there to intercede for them.

The words وَكَانُوۡا بِشُرَكَآئِهِمۡ كٰفِرِيۡنَ state that these people themselves, who today are united against all those who oppose their deities, will reject these deities. I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ that in the various phases of the Day of Judgement the disbelievers will adopt different attitudes with the deities they associated with God. In utter bewilderment and anxiety, they will try to do whatever they can in various situations to achieve their end. However, on that day, they will not be able to achieve any end they have. It will be a place where they will have to face the reality.

Here this feature of the language should be kept in mind in which future events are expressed in the past tense, for example وَلَمۡ يَكُنۡ لَّهُمۡ and وَكَانُوۡا بِشُرَكَآئِهِمۡ. This style is adopted to convey to the addressees that what they consider as improbable is presented before them by the speaker in the past tense as if the event has already taken place. The Qur'ān has adopted this style at most places where the events of the Hereafter are depicted.

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9. And the day when the Hereafter arrives, the wrongdoers will lose hope and no one from their partners with God will intercede for them and they will deny their partners with God.

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وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَهُمْ فِيْ رَوْضَةٍ يُّحْبَرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآئِ الْاٰخِرَةِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾[10]

This verse implies that this world has been created as a place of trials and tests and hence believers and disbelievers are intermingled in it. In most cases, the righteous are oppressed and persecuted and the wrongdoers are dominant. For this reason, this world does not seem to be a meaningful place to people who are without insight. However, when the Day of Judgement arrives, the believers and the disbelievers will be separated. Those who had faith and had done righteous deeds will be in bliss in a grand orchard, and those who disbelieved and denied God's revelations and meeting Him will be seized with punishment. Here the word رَوْضَةٌ is mentioned as a common noun to magnify it. In other words, they will be in the grandest of the orchards of Paradise. The word يُّحْبَرُوْنَ means to make someone happy and blissful. The implication is that God will provide them with all the means that will make them joyous. The word مُحْضَرُوْنَ is meant to portray the humiliation and helplessness of the wrongdoers. The implication is that they will be tied up and dragged towards the torment the way convicted prisoners are hauled up.

فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[11]

This verse states what is required of people if they believe in God's oneness and in His law of retribution mentioned in previous verses. It is said that the consequence of this belief is that they should only glorify God by morning and evening and at the time of *ẓuhr* and *'aṣr*.

The words وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ form a parenthetical sentence in between the times of glorifying God. It is meant to remind and warn people. The implication is that this call to glorify Him is not an alien call; every part of the heavens and the earth are singing His praises. So those who are worshipping someone other than God are not in harmony with the overall tune of the universe. However, those who are glorifying God and singing His praises are in harmony with it. Found in these words is also a ring of aloofness that the

10. The day when the Hereafter arrives, the believers and the disbelievers will be separated. Thus those who professed faith and did good deeds will rejoice in a beautiful orchard. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations and the meeting of the Hereafter will be seized in torment.

11. Therefore, glorify God when you enter evening and when you enter morning and praises are being sung to Him in the heavens and the earth and at the time of *'ishā* also and also at the time when you enter *ẓuhr*.

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unfortunate people who are not glorifying God and singing His praises should not think that there is a dearth in this regard. Every nook and corner of this universe resounds with God's glorification and praise.

Deliberation shows that the times which God has specified for expressing His glorification and praise are the ones in which a great sign appears. For example, the night passes into the day or the day into the night; the sun descends from the line of sight or the night darkens. Obviously, for a person who reflects, these times specially effect his heart and mind and shake and prod him to remember God at the time when at His behest such a great transformation takes place in the world. If this does not move a person, then it means he is a dull animal.

The prayers of *fajr* and *ẓuhr* are very clearly mentioned in these verses. If the word تُمْسُوْنَ is considered to imply both *'aṣr* and *maghrib* prayers and the word عَشِيًّا implies the *'ishā'* prayer, then all the prayer timings can be understood to be mentioned in these verses. The word عَشِيًّا can be applied both to the time of *zawāl* (time of sun's descent) and to the time between *maghrib* and *'ishā'*. For this reason, it would not be wrong to regard it to imply the time of *'ishā*.

Section II: Verses (19-29)

In the succeeding verses, arguments to substantiate the Hereafter and monotheism are mentioned in an appropriate order. The Hereafter is mentioned to delineate the fact that the real wisdom and meaningfulness of this world can only become evident with it. Monotheism is mentioned to show that without it the Hereafter is a meaningless thing: if it is believed that whatever a person's deeds, his intercessors will save him, then the advent of the Hereafter or otherwise is the same. The importance of the Hereafter is in the belief that on that day God's justice will completely manifest itself and no one would be able to hinder Him in administering impartial justice. Readers may now proceed to study the following verses.

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمِنْ
اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ اِذَاۤ اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا
لِّتَسْكُنُوْۤا اِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَّوَدَّةً وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلْقُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ اَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَاَلْوَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْعٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ مَنَامُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ

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وَالنَّهَارِ وَابْتِغَآؤُكُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ يُرِيْكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا
وَّيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَيُحْيٖ بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ
تَقُوْمَ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ ثُمَّ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ دَعْوَةً ۖ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ۖ اِذَاۤ اَنْتُمْ تَخْرُجُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَهٗ مَنْ فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ
الْاَعْلٰى فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَّثَلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ
اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ تَخَافُوْنَهُمْ كَخِيْفَتِكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ
لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْۤا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْ مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ
نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

He brings forth the living from the dead, and the dead from the living. And turns the earth green again after it becomes dry. And in this manner you will be taken out. And among His signs is that He created you from clay; and, behold, you become human beings that spread out in the earth. And among His signs is also that He created spouses for you from among your species so that you receive comfort from them. And He planted love and sympathy among you. Indeed, there are different signs in this for those who reflect. And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity in your languages and colours also. Indeed, there are different signs in this for people of knowledge. And among His signs is your sleeping at night and day seeking His bounty – Indeed, there are different signs in this for those who hear and understand. And from among His signs He shows you lightning which inspires fear in you and also hope and sends down rain from the sky, and thus gives life to the earth after its death. Indeed, there are different signs in this for those who use their intellect. And among His signs is also that the heavens and the earth exist at His behest. Then when He calls you just once to come out of the earth, you shall come out of it immediately. And to Him belongs whosoever is in the heavens and the earth. Everyone is obedient to Him. It is He who initiates creation, and it is He who will recreate and this is easier for Him. And His is the most exalted attribute in the heavens and the earth. And He alone is the Mighty, the Wise one. (22-27)

He cites a parable for you from among yourselves. Do some of your slaves share with you on equal terms the blessings We have bestowed on you and keep them in consideration the way you consider one another? In this way do We expound Our revelations for those who use their intellect. In fact, these people who have been unjust to their souls have followed their innovations without reason. So who can guide those whom God has led astray? And no

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one will be able to help them. (28-29)

Explanation

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[12]

Just as the word اخراج means "to take out something from something," it also means "to make something apparent." This verse dispels the notion of the disbelievers that the recreation of mankind is something improbable. They are informed that how can they regard this as improbable if they see life coming out of death and death overtaking life in every part of this universe. As an example, the verse states that they see that the earth is dry and desolate at times but God through a single burst of rain brings life in it. In a similar way, people too will be raised to life again once they die and decay. Life and death are in the authority of the Almighty. Neither is giving death to the living nor raising the dead to life difficult for Him. The rehearsal of the Day of Judgement goes on before their eyes every now and then. Though the example of life after death is primarily meant to be presented here, yet in order to highlight the profound power of God, reference is also given of death after life. We have discussed this aspect in detail under verses 95-96 of Sūrah al-An'ām.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ اِذَاۤ اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾[13]

The verse implies that all the realities to which they are being invited to believe in are based on the power and wisdom of their creator. So why do they demand external evidence for His power and wisdom? The greatest evidence of this is found within their own creation. He created human beings from clay. They then spread in the earth as cognizant beings. The particle اِذَآ is meant to direct attention to this profound power. In other words, people should reflect on the magnificent transformation from clay to a living human being. The two are so far apart yet God's power populated the whole world with human beings. In other words, if a person disputes God recreating mankind, then this is the height of foolishness. This is stated at another place in the Qur'ān in the following words:

اَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْاِنْسَانُ اَنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ فَاِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ. وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَّنَسِيَ خَلْقَهٗ ؕ قَالَ مَنْ

12. He brings forth the living from the dead, and the dead from the living. And turns the earth green after it becomes dry. And in this manner you will be taken out.

13. And among His signs is that He created you from clay; and, behold, you become human beings that spread out in the earth.

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يُّحۡیِ الۡعِظَامَ وَ ہِیَ رَمِیۡمٌ. (۳٦: ۷۷-۷۸)[14]

Has man not reflected that We created him from a drop of fluid; yet he became an open rival. And he made fun of Me and forgot his own creation. He says: "Now, who can give life to bones when they have decayed?"

وَ مِنۡ اٰیٰتِہٖۤ اَنۡ خَلَقَ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِکُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا لِّتَسۡکُنُوۡۤا اِلَیۡہَا وَ جَعَلَ بَیۡنَکُمۡ مَّوَدَّۃً وَّ رَحۡمَۃً ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّتَفَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[15]

Now a step further is taken: attention is directed at a great sign found in the world around man: God created from His species his spouse so that he may obtain comfort from her and for this purpose placed love and sympathy among them. It is stated that in this phenomenon are various signs for those who reflect.

The first clear sign in it is that God has created everything in pairs in this universe and each member of a pair complements its counterpart with regard to their basis of existence. This also indicates that this world also has a pair which is the Hereafter. It is together with the Hereafter that this world becomes meaningful.

The second sign in this is that our creator is very merciful and affectionate. If He placed the desire of a spouse in us, He also created her from our own species and also placed the emotions of love and sympathy between the two so that both spend their lives as two bodies having a single soul.

The third sign is that there exists great harmony in the opposing elements of this universe and an amazing accord to come together to fulfill a higher objective. This is a clear indication to the fact that this universe has one creator Who creates this harmony between these opposing elements.

The fourth sign is that people who think that this universe was created of its own accord are foolish. If it has evolved like this, then how can this harmony exist between opposing elements? This is a clear evidence to a powerful and wise being governing this whole system on the basis of His wisdom and sagacity.

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14. Has man not reflected that We created him from a drop of fluid; yet he became an open rival. And he made fun of Me and forgot his own creation. He says: "Now, who can give life to bones when they have decayed?"

15. And among His signs is also that He created spouses for you from among your species so that you receive comfort from them. And He planted love and sympathy among you. Indeed, in this are different signs for those who reflect.

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وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ اَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَاَلْوَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْعٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[16]

Attention is directed at the fact stated earlier by restating it from a different angle: if people reflect, they will clearly see that hidden in the multiplicity found in this universe is unity. On the one had is the unfathomable expanse of the heavens and on the other is the planet earth. The two are far apart yet such is the deep relationship between the two that no sane person can believe that both have been brought into existence by separate creators and are being governed by separate forces. On the contrary, the harmony between them vehemently bears evidence that a single powerful and wise creator is governing both and has harnessed them to achieve a single objective. In a similar way, if the world of human beings is deliberated upon, it will be seen that whole nations have different languages and each person has a different accent and there exist people of different colours as well. However, in spite of this diversity, no sane person can claim that people of a certain language and accent are the creatures of one God and other people are the creatures of another God: every wise person knows that a single creator has brought all of them into existence. It is merely the profound nature of His creative skill that He has created every single person in a different mold with a different voice. No two people are alike among the billions found on this planet. Each has different colours, heights and features.

The words اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْعٰلِمِيْنَ state that there are many signs in this for those who have knowledge. In the previous verse, it was said that there are many signs for those who reflect. It is evident from this that the real knowledgeable are those who reflect on this universe and through this reflection observe unity in multiplicity and accord in discord. They then reflect on the attributes of power and wisdom of God and reach the conclusion that this huge universe has not been made without a purpose. Hence a day of judgement will necessarily come in which the righteous are rewarded for their righteousness and the wrongdoers are punished for their wrongdoing.

It also evident from this verse that the difference in the language and colour among people should not be made the basis of discrimination between them. These features should not be the means of make or break between them. Just as in spite of diversity in language and colour very human being is a creature of God, in a similar way in spite of other such apparent differences human beings should live under the same system of God's governance. Those who

16. And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity in your languages and colours also. Indeed, there are different signs in this for people of knowledge.

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regard colour and creed to be a means of discrimination between human beings strike on the unity of this universe and this in the terms of the Qur'ān is polytheism and spreading disorder in the land.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ مَنَامُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَابْتِغَآؤُكُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[17]

The words مَنَامُكُمْ are co-ordinated to ابْتِغَآؤُكُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ. The verse would thus mean: among His signs is the night in which you sleep and the day in which you strive to find His sustenance. Parallels of this interpretation can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*.

The words اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ mean that in this are also signs for those who listen. The corroboration of monotheism found in the harmony between night and day and of the indication of the Hereafter in getting up in the morning from night's sleep has been referred to at many places in this exegesis. However, these signs and arguments can only be understood by those who pay heed to the calls of the Qur'ān and the messenger. This sentence is a sarcastic critique on the attitude of the opponents that those who are bent upon animosity instead of listening and understanding will not be able to benefit from these arguments.

In the previous verses, the words تَفَكُّر (reflection) and عِلْم (knowledge) are mentioned. I have already alluded to their mutual relationship. Here the word سَمْعٌ (listening) is used. Obviously, it is lesser in status than the two above mentioned faculties, yet it is also a means of acquiring knowledge. If a personal is sensible enough to listen to what sensible people say, he can received guidance from this means as well even if he does not have much ability to reflect on the system of this universe and its secrets.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ يُرِيْكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَيُحْيٖ بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[18]

This verse states that among God's signs is lightning which has the aspects of hope and despair as well as of anticipation and fear in it. At times, it heralds the coming of rain as a bounty of God and at others, wreaks havoc for a nation. The first of these cases is very common which we often see. The

17. And among His signs is your sleeping at night and day seeking His bounty – Indeed, there are different signs in this for those who hear and understand.

18. And from among His signs He shows you lightning which inspires fear in you and also hope and sends down rain from the sky, and thus gives life to the earth after its death. Indeed, there are different signs in this for those who use their intellect.

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second of these can be seen in the history of ancient nations. The Qur'ān has mentioned صَاعِقَةٌ (lightning) in the destruction of the 'Ād and the Thamūd and I have explained its implication at relevant places. The verse ends on the note that there are signs in these phenomena for those who use their intellect. The first sign in it is that both mercy and destruction are in the hands of God. For this reason in the states of hope and despair as well as in the states of anticipation and fear, people should turn towards God. It is absolutely wrong of the Idolaters to regard one being to bestow mercy on mankind another to send down torment on them. The second sign is that it is an absolutely wrong notion that God is not concerned with the affairs of this universe; the fact is that He is directly running these affairs and according to His law of justice rewards or punishes nations. The third sign in this is that if the Almighty intends to send His punishment on a nation, He does not need a separate team for this task; He can turn any of his blessings into a bane.

I have referred to the argumentative aspect found in وَّيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَيُحۡيِۦ بِهِ الۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ مَوۡتِهَا while explaining verse 19 earlier.

وَمِنۡ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنۡ تَقُوۡمَ السَّمَآءُ وَالۡاَرۡضُ بِاَمۡرِهٖ ؕ ثُمَّ اِذَا دَعَاكُمۡ دَعۡوَةً ۖ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ ۖ اِذَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ تَخۡرُجُوۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَلَهٗ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوۡنَ ﴿۲۶﴾[19]

These verses strongly negate the notion that may arise in a person's mind: how can this secure system of the heavens and the earth be shattered at the advent of the Day of Judgement? It may be kept in mind that the question which the Arabs would raise about the mountains would be on these very lines: who can move these structures? For this reason, they regarded the threats of the advent of this Day to be mere bluff. It is while keeping in view this mentality of theirs that this verse states that the heavens and the earth are intact because of God's behest and shall remain intact as long as He wants them. When He would like to destroy this system and create a new one in its place, He will not face the slightest difficulty. He will just need to call people once from the earth and everyone will immediately issue forth. In other words, He would not even need to repeat His call. A single cry would be enough. This point is stated thus in Sūrah al-Inshiqāq: (٨٤:٢) وَاَذِنَتۡ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتۡ (and obeys its Lord's command and this only is befitting for it, (84:2)).

19. And among His signs is also that the heavens and the earth exist at His behest. Then when He calls you just once to come out of the earth, you shall come out of it immediately. And to Him belongs whosoever is in the heavens and the earth. Everyone is obedient to Him.

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The words وَلَهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ are meant to substantiate what is said above that whatever the heavens and the earth contain are His creatures and are subservient and obedient to Him alone. So who can dare disobey Him or deviate even the slightest from His call.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۲۷﴾[20]

This verse not only substantiates the words اِذَآ اَنْتُمْ تَخْرُجُوْنَ of the above verse but also encapsulates the topic of monotheism which is coming up. This rationale of being raised up on the Day of Judgement has also been given in verse 11 earlier. The same words are not repeated here; in fact the words وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ are also added. It is stated that it is He who initiates creation and it is He who will recreate and this recreation is easier for them if people just think. The implication is that when the addressees of this verse accept that it is He who has created them, why do they regard His recreating them to be improbable? Is the first task more difficult or repeating it?

In the sentence وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ, the word الْمَثَل connotes an attribute. It is used as an attribute of God in the Qur'ān because His attributes are mentioned in words which belong to our language and which we speak. This style has been adopted because without adopting it, these attributes cannot be properly gauged by us; obviously, they have been used in the higher meaning which befits the Almighty.

It is said that it is He who is worthy of all noble attributes found in the heavens and the earth. No one else shares these attributes with Him. After this, two of His attributes are specially referred to: الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ (dominant and wise). He is dominant on everything and is exalted and that all His works are based on wisdom. The implication is that no task is difficult for Him. Nothing except His wisdom intervenes in His intention. There is no one in the whole universe who is a peer to His attributes. It self-evidently emanates from this that when there is no one who can match Him in His attributes, no one should be regarded as His match in the obligations man owes to Him.

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَّثَلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ

20. It is He who initiates creation, and it is He who will recreate and this is easier for Him. And His is the most exalted attribute in the heavens and the earth. And He alone is the Mighty, the Wise one.

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تَخَافُوْنَهُمْ كَخِيْفَتِكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾[21]

Mentioned in this verse is a rationale against associating others in the attributes and rights of God which the addressees of this verse themselves acknowledge. It is stated that to find an argument against their polytheism, these people do not need to go anywhere; God presents their own mutual dealing as a proof of His claim. They are posed this question: Do they regard their slaves and servants to have an equal share in the wealth He has blessed them with and they regard their slaves the way they regard their relatives? The word خَوف here means to "give regard." It is used in wide meanings and I have discussed this aspect at some place in this exegesis.

The implication is that when these people are not ready to grant their slaves equal ownership to what they have even though it has been given to them by God, why have they made associates of God in His rights? This is a very unjust act as they ascribe to God what they do not like for their own selves even though it is God Who in alone in these heavens and the earth is in fact worthy of all high attributes and rights. This is a psychological argument in refutation of polytheism like the one cited at another place in the Qur'ān in which it is said that the polytheists ascribe daughters to God while they themselves dislike daughters and even feel ashamed to let others people know that they have daughters among their offspring. The real argumentative aspect which is present here is that notwithstanding the fact that there are plenty of arguments and signs against polytheism in the world inside man and that around him as well as in nature and intellect, another argument against it is that the polytheists ascribe to God what they do not like for themselves. The right attitude in this regard would have been that what they do not like for themselves they should have been even more strict in not ascribing to God.

It is as if the above argument has completed the objective for whose explanation it was given. Hence the verse ends with the words: كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ (in this manner, we explain our arguments for those who use their intellect). For those who do not use their intellect and have consigned it to oblivion, these arguments can be of no avail.

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21. He cites a parable for you from among yourselves. Do some of your slaves share with you on equal terms the blessings We have bestowed on you and keep them in consideration the way you consider one another? In this way do We expound Our revelations for those who use their intellect.

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بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْ مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[22]

The expression الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا refers to the polytheists who are guilty of committing an oppression as great as polytheism. It is stated that these people are not among those who are guided by intellect; they are the ones who follow their desires and innovations. In the expression بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ the word عِلْمٍ connotes "argument and proof." In other words, it is not knowledge and proof which they have made their guide; they are blindly following their desires.

The words فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْ مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ imply that those who have gone astray in accordance with the law of God cannot be guided by anyone. God has blessed human beings with intellect but many wretched people have consigned their reins to their whims. God lets such crooked people wander in their desires. The words وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ imply that these people then spend their lives in this wandering; neither is there anyone for them in this world who can bring them back to the right path nor will they find any helper in the Hereafter to save them from destruction.

Section III: Verses (30-39)

In the preceding verses, an answer is given to the objections raised by the Idolaters against the call of Islam by citing the defeat of the Romans at the hands of the Persians in their support. Now in the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) and his companions are strongly urged to follow with full concentration and devotion the religion of nature: Islam and to fully adhere to its two pillars: the prayer and spending for the cause of God. At the end, the Quraysh are warned that their evil beliefs and deeds have encompassed them from all sides; so now the time of their accountability has drawn near. They will soon meet their fate and those who diligently adhere to the religion of Abraham (sws) will be rewarded by God with His blessings. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا ۭ فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۭ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ ۙ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ مُنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوْهُ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا شِيَعًا ۭ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۢ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَاِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ

22. In fact, these people who have been unjust to their souls have followed their innovations without reason. So who can guide those whom God has led astray? And no one will be able to help them.

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مُّنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ اِذَآ اَذَاقَهُمْ مِّنْهُ رَحْمَةً اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ؕ
فَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۫ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَمْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَاِذَآ اَذَقْنَا
النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوْا بِهَا ؕ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ ۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ اِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ
يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَ
ابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَآ اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَا۟
فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوْا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَآ اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ زَكٰوةٍ تُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾

Therefore, turn yourself dedicatedly to the religion of *tawḥīd*, Follow the religion of nature on which God created people. It is not permissible to change the nature created by God. This alone is the true religion but most people do not know. Turning attentively to it and fear Him only and be diligent in the prayer. And be not among the Idolaters – the Idolaters who split their religion apart and became divided into many sects. Each sect is engrossed in what it has. (30-32)

When people are inflicted with some calamity they call their Lord while turning to Him. Then when God makes them happy through His blessings, one group from them begins to associate partners with its Lord so as to show ingratitude to what We have bestowed on it. So, reap pleasure for a few days. Soon you will come to know. Have We revealed to them a proof which bears witness to those whom they associate with God. (33-35)

And when We bless people with joy through Our mercy, they become conceited and if because of their deeds they are struck with a calamity, they immediately take to despair. Have they not reflected that it is God Who abundantly gives sustenance to whomsoever He wills and gives sparingly to whomsoever He wills. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who believe. (36-37)

Therefore, give to the kinfolk, the destitute and the traveler his right. This is better for those who want to please God, and it is they who shall succeed. And the interest-based loan you give that it may prosper in the wealth of others, it does not prosper with God. And the *zakāh* you will give to please God, it is these people who are ones who will increase their wealth with God. (38-39)

Explanation

فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا ؕ فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ؕ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ
الْقَيِّمُ ۙ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾[23]

23. Therefore, turn yourself dedicatedly to the religion of *tawḥīd*. Follow the

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Here the address is in the singular which is an obvious indication that it is directed to the Prophet (sws). Yet this address to him is in his capacity of the leader and advocate of the Muslims. Consequently, in the succeeding verses both the address and the accusatives of state (*hāl*) occur in the plural. In this particular verse, the Prophet (sws) and through him the rest of the Muslims are told that it has become clearly evident from reasons given earlier that the objections raised by his opponents against his call and the religion presented by him are totally baseless. The Prophet (sws) and his companions should devote themselves to the true religion of God and just ignore their opponents. The word الدِّيْنُ refers to the true religion of God: Islam. It was this religion to which all prophets and messengers of God called their people and which was completed through Muḥammad (sws). This religion is the true religion of God. Thus the it is stated: إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللّٰهِ الإِسْلاَمُ (۳: ۱۹) (the only true religion in God's sight is Islam, (3:19)). The word حَنِيْف means "devoted and dedicated." The implication is that while disregarding all the filth of polytheism he should turn to the religion of monotheism the way Abraham (sws) had done. This word is specially used in the Qur'ān for Abraham (sws). For this reason, there is a reminder in this word of the example of dedication set by him.

Consider next the expression: فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِیْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا. Here a verb is suppressed which is evident from the previous verb. The implication would be: "while disconnecting yourself from everything follow this religion of nature on which the creator of nature has created people." At another place, I have already referred to the benefit of suppressing a verb at such instances: the purpose is to focus the entire attention of the addressee on the object of the verb. These words actually substantiate the veracity of the الدِّيْنُ (the religion) to which the earlier part of the verse directs the Prophet (sws) to devotedly turn to. In other words, this religion is not something which is being imposed on them externally. It is a treasure found within the nature of human beings. It is evident from this verse that wrong are the philosophers who say that the nature of a human being is like a clean slate and that it is the environment he lives in and the traditions that he is exposed to that make him what he becomes. God has created man in the best of moulds with the best of natures. He has granted him the awareness of good and evil and the cognizance of right and wrong. At the same time, God has also given him the urge to adopt what is right and shun what is wrong. However, this nature of man is not like the instinct of animals from which they cannot deviate. A person has the power of free will as well. For this reason, at times, a person is

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religion of nature on which God created people. It is not permissible to change the nature created by God. This alone is the true religion but most people do not know.

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so blinded by the love of this world and his own desires that in spite of knowing what is right and what is wrong goes after the wrong and in fact invents pretexts in favour.

It should be kept in mind that a person is in need of prophetic guidance not because he did not have an awareness of good and evil in him; on the contrary, in spite of this awareness because of some inherent weaknesses he could have been misled in many cases. Similarly, it was not possible for him to understand all the consequences of the basic concepts ingrained in his nature. For all this guidance, the Almighty sent prophets and messengers. Since the teachings of these prophets were based on the fundamental concepts ingrained in human nature, all upright people regarded the calls of the prophets to the calls of their own self. Only those people opposed the prophets who had perverted their natures, even though in their hearts they had acknowledged the veracity of the prophets. I have dwelt in detail on this subject in the explanation of Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah al-Nūr. If there is any need, readers may look it up. If the Qur'ān is called ذِکْر and ذِکْرٰی, it is because it reminds people of the concepts already found in them but they kept forgetting them and becoming oblivious to them.

In the sentence لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ the particle لَا is not meant for negation or negation of a possibility or negation of happening. Here it refers to negation of permissibility.

The implication is that it is not permissible to change the nature created by God. He is the Creator of everything. No one can know better than Him the purpose and objective of His creatures and hence none can be entitled to change anything created by Him. If a person dares do such a thing, it will mean that he claims that he can improve something created by God – which obviously is an absurd thought. It is much like placing the eyes that God has placed near the forehead at the back of the neck or at the foot of a person. It is like a woman – who God has made a woman – trying to become a man or vice versa. Such unbecoming efforts are bound to end in failures. Same is the case with the religion of nature. It is on the concepts of this religion which the Almighty has ingrained in a person that his well-being in this world and success in the next depends. If people deviate from it, they will deviate from the straight path. The necessary consequence of this is that his worldly and religious life will be ruined even if this deviation is made with the help of tall claims from science and other disciplines of knowledge.

It is then stated: ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ ie. It is this religion which is the right religion. This means that it is this religion which has direct relationship with a person's intellect and nature. This is a very straight and short route to access God; there is no deviation in it.

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The words وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ state that most people are not aware of this reality. For this reason they have distorted it and now are trying their best to keep intact this distortion as well to urge people to adhere to this distortion.

مُنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوْهُ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾[24]

The expression مُنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ is an accusative of state (*hāl*) from the pronoun of address in فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ. It has been alluded to earlier that though this address is singular as far as the words are concerned, yet they imply plurality. The Prophet (sws) is addressed in them as the advocate and leader of the Muslims. The plural nature of the accusative of state confirms this deduction. The earlier verse asked the Prophet (sws) and as a result all Muslims to dedicate and devote themselves to God. This verse directs them to turn to God and to be God-fearing. The implication is that devotion of the intellect is not sufficient. Turning to God and fearing Him is also needed and at the same time fully abiding by the limits set by Him.

Consider next the words: وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ. The prayer is from among the basic directives of this religion. It is not only the protector but also the manifestation of dedication to God, turning to Him and God-consciousness stressed upon here.

The words وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ sound an admonition that they should remain at a distance from the Idolaters because they have ruined all the implications of this upright religion.

مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا شِيَعًا ؕ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۢ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[25]

This verse provides more details about the Idolaters following whose ways was expressly prohibited in the previous verse. This explanation has connected the discourse to the actual existing situation. Its foremost connotation is the Quraysh who by being incriminated with polytheism had totally split apart the religion they had received through Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). Abraham (sws) taught them that there is only one God but they ended up inventing several gods and each tribe was so devoted to its god that it was not prepared to hear anything against him. Muslims were not given this directive because there was a possibility of anyone of them joining the Idolaters. On the contrary, this is an expression of abhorrence from

24. Turning attentively to it and fear Him only and be diligent in the prayer. And be not among the Idolaters –

25. the Idolaters who split their religion apart and became divided into many sects. Each sect is engrossed in what it has.

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polytheism and polytheists and has been stated while addressing the Muslims instead of the polytheists. It is as if the polytheists are not worthy of being addressed because of their stubbornness and hence the followers of the Prophet (sws) are addressed.

وَاِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُّنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ اِذَآ اَذَاقَهُمْ مِّنْهُ رَحْمَةً اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ؕ فَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۫ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[26]

This is a direct threat sounded to the Idolaters. Such is their state that when they are caught in a whirlpool, they beseech God with humility and obedience but when God blesses them with His mercy, they forget God and return to their deities whom they associate with Him. This subject has been discussed earlier in various styles and is also coming up in verse 32 of Sūrah al-Luqmān.

What is discussed in the words لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ؕ فَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۫ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ has already been brought up earlier in verse 66 of Sūrah al-'Ankabūt: they receive favours from God but thank others and in this way show ingratitude to His favours. It is then said in a very stern manner that in spite of their ingratitude they may benefit from God's favours but soon they will bear the consequences of this attitude.

اَمْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾[27]

It has been explained earlier that a part of the discourse is suppressed in such interrogative sentences. It can be gauged from the tone of the speaker. If this suppression is accounted for, the whole discourse would be something like: these naïve people have baselessly made partners of God or have we revealed a proof which bears evidence to these associates being partners of God? In this style, sarcasm and humiliation, anger and wrath all are encapsulated. Very subtle examples of this style can be found in the last group of the Qur'ān.

These verses direct our attention to a very important psychological argument in favour of monotheism: when a person is really in need and is helpless, he leaves all other means and sources as well as his self-invented

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26. When people are inflicted with some calamity they call their Lord while turning to Him. Then when God makes them happy through His blessings, one group from them begins to associate partners with its Lord so as to show ingratitude to what We have bestowed on it. So, reap pleasure for a few days. Soon you will come to know.

27. Have We revealed to them a proof which bears witness to those whom they associate with God.

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deities and with full devotion turns to God. As soon as he finds relief and comfort, he once again resorts to the same misdoings he was formerly guilty of. It is evident from this that the real reason of polytheism is indifference. When a person is awoken from this indifference because of some warning, he begins to see the reality; when the situation changes he returns to his state of indifference.

وَاِذَآ اَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوْا بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ اِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[28]

The verse states that the Almighty wants people whom He blessed with favours to be grateful. Similarly, He wants them to show patience if He puts them through trials and tribulations as a result of their misdeeds. Yet very few people turn out to be grateful to favours and patient on trials. Most people become arrogant when they are given favours and lose hope and despair if they are put through trials. These comments have been given in a general way because this is how things happen generally. However, at the time of revelation of this *sūrah*, they obviously referred to the Quraysh. In this way, they were indirectly told that today they are showing arrogance on the favours bestowed on them by God but tomorrow if they will be seized by Him they will cry and scream.

It is evident from the words بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ that if people are faced with a calamity in this world, then it is due to their misdeeds. This is the established practice of God as far as evil people are concerned. However, in this world all people even the great prophet Abraham (sws) undergo big trials. Such trials are in accordance with the established practice of trials constituted by God. According to this established practice, all people whether good or evil must undergo trials. It is not necessary that this be because of their deeds; in fact, in most circumstances it is because God wants to train and improve people.

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[29]

The implication is that have these people not reflected that abundance or constriction in sustenance is in the hands of God. Its increase or decrease depends entirely on His desire and this desire is based on wisdom. For this

28. And when We bless people with joy through Our mercy, they become conceited and if because of their deeds they are struck with a calamity, they immediately take to despair.

29. Have they not reflected that it is God Who abundantly gives sustenance to whomsoever He wills and gives sparingly to whomsoever He wills. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who believe.

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reason, neither is it permissible for anyone to despair nor show pride and conceit. Only he has the right to show this pride who has control over his sustenance and only he should show despair in God who finds another way for himself than the way of God. When none of these options is possible, then the only right attitude is that a person shows gratitude on favours and patience during trials. God tests a person through both these circumstances. It will only be in the Hereafter when we will come to know who succeeded in this test and who failed.

It is stated that if people deliberate on this reality, then there are many signs for those who believe.

The greatest sign in this is that all the affairs of this universe are in the control of God, the one and only. Just as no one has control over life and death, similarly no one has control over increasing or decreasing of sustenance.

The second sign in this is that neither is an abundance of sustenance in this world an indication of a person's success nor its scantiness an indication of a person's failure. Both situations, in fact, are meant to test people. Success and failure will be decided in the Hereafter.

The third sign in this is that in this world every instant people are put into the trials of gratitude or patience. The fountainhead of all higher qualities in a person is these two traits. An explanation of this has already been given at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

فَاٰتِ ذَاالْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَ الْمِسْكِيْنَ وَ ابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾[30]

Earlier in verse 31, the foremost pillar of this religion of nature has been mentioned in the form of the prayer. After this, some warnings were sounded. The last of these was that it is not befitting for a person who has abundant resources to regard them to be a legacy of his forefathers or a product of his own abilities and thereby show conceit; on the contrary, he should always remain grateful to his Lord.

Now in this verse, the way this gratitude should be expressed is delineated: people should give what is due on them from their wealth to their kindred, the destitute and the traveler. It is evident from the word حَقَّهٗ that there is a rightful share in the wealth of a person who is blessed with means and resources by God. He is actually entrusted with the obligation of fulfilling

30. Therefore, give to the kinfolk, the destitute and the traveller his right. This is better for those who want to please God, and it is they who shall succeed.

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this right. If there is any negligence in fulfilling them, he will be regarded as a usurper. The verse sates that for those who seek the pleasure of God this is the right way and it is they who will succeed in the Hereafter. It is an obvious corollary of this that people who make their wealth to be a means of conceit, luxury and greed will find that this wealth will become a means of loss and failure before God.

وَمَآ اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَا۟ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوْا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَآ اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ زَكٰوةٍ تُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[31]

The word رِبا is used for the money that is lent on interest and is also used for the interest which is charged on lent money. Those who regard it to mean a gift are absolutely wrong. This word is used in accordance with the linguistic principle of Arabic called تسمية الشيء إلى ما يؤول إليه (naming something after its consequence). An example of this can be seen in verse 36 of Sūrah Yūsuf. I have written a detailed article on this verse that is found in my anthology of essays.

The word زَكٰوةٍ here does not occur here as a term. It refers to charity (*ṣadaqāt*). It is used in this meaning in the Qur'ān at other instances as well.

This verse mentions the opposite attitude mentioned in the previous one: there are people who instead of spending their wealth become involved in multiplying it and giving it as an interest-based loan so that it increases after sucking the blood of others; such people should remember that even if they multiply their wealth in this manner in this world, they should remember that it will not increase with God. Such wealth is obliterated by Him as is stated at another instance in the Qur'ān. Only that wealth increases with God which is spent in His way to please Him.

If one reflects on this verse, it becomes evident that God has compared the wealth of an interest-charger to an ox that grows fat by grazing on the lands of others. There is no blessing in such wealth. Only that wealth carries any blessing which grows by grazing in its own field and then is expended to please God and to fulfill rights. The verse states that it is such people who increase their capital. The rate of this increase has been mentioned in detail at another instance in the Qur'ān.

The desire to accumulate wealth is generally because of fears of the future. Yet a person views the future with a very narrow eye and sees what lies ahead

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31. And the interest-based loan you give that it may prosper in the wealth of others, it does not prosper with God. And the *zakāh* you will give to please God, it is these people who are ones who will increase their wealth with God.

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of him in this world only. He is not able to see the real future which is the Hereafter. He should realize that he can gain the real benefit of this wealth if instead of depositing it in the banks of this world he deposits it in the bank of God so that it can be of use to him in his eternal life.

Here it may also be kept in mind, as is pointed out at another place, that there is a basic difference between the capital invested by a tradesman or a businessman in a permissible trade or business and between the capital of a money lender who increases it by lending it on interest: the capital of a tradesman or a businessman after braving many dangers and different circumstances increases from its own circle of investment; on the other hand, the capital of an interest-lender is like an ambush in which he hides and without taking any risks increases itself from the money of the needy. Because of this basic difference between the two, Islam has regarded the increase gained in trade and business to be blessed and the increase gained through interest to be evil and prohibited.

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Section IV: Verses (40-60)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The opponents of the Prophet (sws) are threatened in them. They are guilty of razing to ground the two foundations of the religion of nature: monotheism and sympathy. In this way they have ruined the whole social set-up and created disorder in the land. This attitude has entitled to be seized by the Almighty so that they may be punished them for their misdemeanour.

After this, Muslims are given glad tidings of divine help and dominance. It is also highlighted through signs of this universe that when God wants to shower His mercy on someone He transforms unfavourable circumstances into favourable ones.

At the same time, it is stressed upon the Prophet (sws) and the companions to fully adhere to the religion of nature and are told to ignore all those who have become blind and deaf. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ یُمِیْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ یُحْیِیْكُمْ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآىِٕكُمْ مَّنْ یَّفْعَلُ مِنْ ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ ؕ
سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَ تَعٰلٰى عَمَّا یُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۴۰﴾ ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِی الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَیْدِی النَّاسِ لِیُذِیْقَهُمْ بَعْضَ
الَّذِیْ عَمِلُوْا لَعَلَّهُمْ یَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۴۱﴾ قُلْ سِیْرُوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ

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مُّشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ الْقَيِّمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّصَّدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ مَنْ
كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِاَنْفُسِهِمْ يَمْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ
فَضْلِهٖ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّرْسِلَ الرِّيَاحَ مُبَشِّرٰتٍ وَّلِيُذِيْقَكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَلِتَجْرِيَ
الْفُلْكُ بِاَمْرِهٖ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ
فَجَاۗءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا ۭ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ
يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ فَتُثِيْرُ سَحَابًا فَيَبْسُطُهٗ فِي السَّمَاۗءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاۗءُ وَيَجْعَلُهٗ كِسَفًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلٰلِهٖ ۚ
فَاِذَآ اَصَابَ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖٓ اِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يُّنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ
قَبْلِهٖ لَمُبْلِسِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اٰثٰرِ رَحْمَتِ اللّٰهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۭ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ۚ وَهُوَ
عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَىِٕنْ اَرْسَلْنَا رِيْحًا فَرَاَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَّظَلُّوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَاِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ
الْمَوْتٰى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاۗءَ اِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِ الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ ۭ اِنْ تُسْمِعُ اِلَّا مَنْ
يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ ضُعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضُعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضُعْفًا وَّشَيْبَةً ۭ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاۗءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْقَدِيْرُ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ۙ
مَا لَبِثُوْا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ كَانُوْا يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ
اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ ۠ فَهٰذَا يَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَيَوْمَىِٕذٍ لَّا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَ
لَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِيْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۭ وَلَىِٕنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ لَّيَقُوْلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا مُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ
وَّلَا يَسْتَخِفَّنَّكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

It is God Who created you, then provided you with sustenance, then gives you death, then will bring you back to life. Has any of the partners you associate with God done any of these things? Pure is He and exalted above all what they associate with Him. Disorder everywhere on the land and sea has spread in consequence of the misdeeds of people so that God may make them taste the fruit of their misdeeds that they may pay heed. (40-41)

Tell them: "Roam about in the land and observe the fate of those gone by. Most of them were polytheists." (42)

Thus align yourself with the true religion before arrives from God a day which cannot be put off. On that day, they will be separated. He who disbelieved will bear its consequences and those who did righteous deeds are indeed paving the way for themselves so that God through His grace reward

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those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. God never befriends the disbelievers. (43-45)

And among His signs is that He sends winds as glad tidings and so as to bless you with His mercy and so that the ships sail at His bidding and that you seek His bounty and that you become grateful. (46)

And before you also We have sent messengers to their nations. Thus they came to them with open signs; so, We took revenge from the wrongdoers. And it was mandatory upon Us to help the believers. It is God Who sends the winds; thus they bring forth the clouds. God then spreads them in the sky as He intends. And He makes them into various layers; then you see rain emerging from between them. Thus when He sends this down to those of His servants He chooses, they rejoice all of a sudden even though they had totally lost hope before this happiness prior to its coming down. So observe the signs of God's mercy: how He enlivens the land after its death. Indeed, it is He who gives life to the dead and He has power over all things. (47-50)

And if We let loose on them another wind so that they see their crops grow pale, then they will turn to disbelief after this. So, you can neither make the dead hear your call nor the deaf while they walk turning away from you. You can also not lead the blind away from their error. You can only make those listen who believe in Our revelations. Thus it is they who are obedient. (51-53)

It is God Who has created you weak; then blessed you with strength after weakness and after strength gave you weakness and old age. He creates whatever He intends and He is all-knowing and all-powerful. (54)

And the day, the Day of Judgement arrives, the wrongdoers will swear that they did not stay but for an hour. In this way, their intellects have been faltering. And those who have been given knowledge and faith will say: "According to the register of God, you have stayed till the Day of Judgement. So this is the day of resurrection but you did not know." Thus on that day the pleas of those who were unjust to themselves will be of no avail nor will they be asked to please God. (55-57)

And We have cited all kinds of parables in this Qur'ān for people. And whatever sign you bring to these people, those who have disbelieved will say: "You are absolute liars." In this manner, God seals the hearts of those who do not want to know. So, be patient. Indeed, the promise of God is certain to be fulfilled. And let not those who do not have conviction prove you weak. (58-60)

Explanation

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ یُمِیْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ یُحْیِیْكُمْ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآىِٕكُمْ مَّنْ یَّفْعَلُ مِنْ ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ ؕ

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سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾[32]

The details of how the Qur'ān has refuted the campaign launched by the Quraysh to create doubts regarding the supremacy of Muslims and the beliefs of monotheism and hereafter have been mentioned in the previous verses. They had raised these doubts by using the victory of the Persians in their favour. Now in this verse the Quraysh are directly warned. They should not try to satisfy themselves on the basis of these childish assurances and in fact face the reality; time has arrived to unfold the consequences of the disorder they have created around them because of their misdeeds; their supposed deities will not be able to save them. This verse is actually a prelude to this warning. It is stated that they have been created by God and it is He Who provides them with sustenance; death too is in His control and then it is He Who will raise them back to life. They cannot claim that a single one of these tasks are done by their deities or they help God in them. So till when will they continue to live on their support? And if they are seized by God, how will these deities save them.

Whilst the first part of the verse was addressed directly to the Quraysh, the last part: سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ is addressed to them in an indirect way. The eloquence found in both these styles has been explained at various instances in this exegesis.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيْقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ عَمِلُوْا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾[33]

Just as the expressions "day and night" and "morning and evening" are meant for comprehensive inclusion and coverage, the expression land and sea (الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ) also occur in the same meaning in such contexts. Thus what is meant to be conveyed is that disorder can be seen in all spheres of life whether individual or collective, ideological or practical. The correctness in view and ideology is entirely based on faith in God and the resoluteness of practice is based on Islam and both these necessitate one another. If one of them falls, the other one falls too and if both of them are razed to the ground then disorder will be rampant in every sphere of human life. If, in spite of the razing down of the two, there seems some spark of life anywhere, then it is just transient.

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32. It is God Who created you, then provided you with sustenance, then gives you death, then will bring you back to life. Has any of the partners you associate with God done any of these things? Pure is He and exalted above all what they associate with Him.

33. Disorder everywhere on the land and sea has spread in consequence of the misdeeds of people so that God may make them taste the fruit of their misdeeds that they may pay heed.

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Those people who give importance to it merely deceive themselves.

The words لِيُذِيْقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ عَمِلُوْا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ express the consequence of the situation as per which certain people because of their misdeeds contaminate each sphere of life with disorder and in this way practically call out to God to punish them for these misdeeds. Consequently, God does precisely this. The purpose is to induce them to pay heed and return to the right path by abandoning their ill-ways.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the nations of God's messengers face two types of torments: first, to jolt them and second to finally vanquish them. Here the Quraysh are warned of the first type of torment: they have made themselves worthy of torment that warns them; if this torment visits them and they do not mend their ways, then that torment will also come which will break their backs.

قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾[34]

The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that they must not rest at peace through childish assurances; they should observe the fate of the previous nations by looking at their remnants. Most of these people were polytheists like them. Just as there are very few monotheists among the Quraysh, among these previous nations too very few purely worshipped God. Finally, God sifted out these few people and destroyed the rest.

فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ الْقَيِّمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّصَّدَّعُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[35]

The direction of address changes in this verse and now the Prophet (sws) and his companions are addressed the way they are in verse 31 earlier. The implication is that if these stubborn and wretched people do not listen, they should be ignored; the Prophet (sws) and his companions should focus their attention on the religion of God which is the call of human nature; they should also start preparing for the day which is certain to come and when it arrives at the behest of God no one will have the power to avert it.

The word يَّصَّدَّعُوْنَ implies that whilst today these people trust their deities and intercessors and also show conceit on the strength of their clan but on that day every one will be separated from one another; no one will be of any benefit to anyone. To convey the same meaning, the word used earlier in verse 14 is: يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ.

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34. Tell them: "Roam about in the land and observe the fate of those gone by. Most of them were polytheists."

35. Thus. align yourself with the true religion before arrives from God a day which cannot be put off. On that day, they will be separated.

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مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِاَنْفُسِهِمْ يَمْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾[36]

On that day, everyone will be rewarded or punished according to his deeds. He who disbelieved will have to face its evil consequences; no one else will share this burden with him. Similarly, those who are doing righteous deeds are actually making their own future bright and only they will be rewarded for it.

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾[37]

This verse is actually connected to the words مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ of verse 43. In other words, the real purpose of that days' arrival is that God with His grace reward those who had faith and did righteous deeds. It is evident from this that the real objective of the Hereafter is to reward the believers; punishing the disbelievers is not the real objective; it is merely the essential consequence.

It is evident from the words مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ that the reward given to the believers will not merely be because of their good deeds but in accordance with the grace of God. And our measures are totally incapable of having an idea of this grace.

Words are unable to express the abhorrence found in the words اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ for disbelief and disbelievers. To gauge the rank and status bestowed on the believers, it is sufficient to be told that the primary reason for the advent of the Hereafter is to reward them. As far as the disbelievers are concerned, the Almighty has merely said that He does not like them. Obviously, when this is the case, the consequence is that their abode will be Hell. God does not care about them.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّرْسِلَ الرِّيَاحَ مُبَشِّرٰتٍ وَّلِيُذِيْقَكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلْكُ بِاَمْرِهٖ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[38]

This verse and the ones succeeding it assure that Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. They are told that just as the Almighty sends favourable winds to suffocating environments which come as glad tidings of mercy to people so that He may grant them with sustenance and provisions, in a similar way,

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36. He who disbelieved will bear its consequences and those who did righteous deeds are indeed paving the way for themselves.

37. So that God through His grace reward those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. God never befriends the disbelievers.

38. And among His signs is that He sends winds as glad tidings and so as to bless you with His mercy and that the ships sail at His bidding and that you seek His bounty and so that you become grateful.

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God will create favourable circumstances for them.

The words وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلْكُ بِأَمْرِهِ express the fact that it is these favourable winds because of which ships sail at the behest of God so that people can travel from one place to another. The expression وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ implies: "so that people seek God's sustenance through trade," The words وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ refer to the fact that all this system of providence has been set up so that people can benefit from God's favours and express gratitude. There is a very subtle warning in this for Muslims: God's help and blessings will manifest itself for them but after receiving them they must not become indifferent to God; on the contrary, these favours entail that they must remain grateful to Him.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا ۖ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾[39]

This verse explains in the light of history what is said in the previous verse. Muḥammad (sws) is not the first messenger of God sent in this world. God has sent messengers before him as well and the way His established practice manifested itself for them, it will also manifest itself in his case. The messengers who came before him also brought veritable signs and proofs to their respective nations. However, instead of valuing these signs and proofs, these nations adopted a criminal attitude and became enemies to those who believed in their messengers and to their companions. Finally, as a consequence of this wrong attitude towards the believers, God punished them. This is because it is incumbent on God to help the believers. The implication is that Muḥammad's enemies too will suffer the same fate. He should rest assured.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَيَجْعَلُهُ كِسَفًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ ۚ فَإِذَا أَصَابَ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمُبْلِسِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾[40]

The circumstances in which the above stated glad tidings of help were

39. And before you also We have sent messengers to their nations. Thus they came to them with open signs; so, We took revenge from the wrongdoers. And it was mandatory upon Us to help the believers.

40. It is God Who sends the winds; thus they bring forth the clouds. God then spreads them in the sky as He intends. And He makes them into various layers; then you see rain emerging from between them. Thus when He sends this down to those of His servants He chooses, they rejoice all of a sudden even though they had totally lost hope before this happiness prior to its coming down.

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given were totally adverse. For this reason, to assure Muslims, in particular the common ones among them, the Almighty has directed their attention to a sign of his power and mercy which every person observes. It is stated that it is God's power and majesty alone that He sends winds which propel the clouds, then according to His wisdom He spreads these clouds the way He intends and makes them multi-layered. Then people see that from within them appears rain. So those who benefit from this favour of God, instantly rejoice even though a little earlier they had lost hope. The implication is that in the same manner, God's mercy and help will appear for Muḥammad (sws). He may consider far it fetched today but when it manifests itself, he will find it to be something near and will rejoice at its arrival.

After the words مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ يُّنَزَّلَ the repetition of مِّنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ in the later part apparently seems to be a repetition. Yet deliberation shows that this is not so. Two separate statements are given here: before rain they had lost hope in rain and before the glad tidings materialized they had lost hope in happiness.

فَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اٰثٰرِ رَحْمَتِ اللّٰهِ كَيْفَ يُحْىِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمُحْىِ الْمَوْتٰى ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۵۰﴾ [41]

This mention of the Hereafter is also meant for assurance. Since believers pin all their hopes on the Hereafter, after referring to the signs of their worldly success in the previous verse, here in this verse the mercy that will manifest itself for them in the Hereafter is also alluded to. They are told that just as they observe the signs of God's mercy when He makes the earth lush after it has become dry, in a similar way, He will raise the dead. He has power over everything. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should ignore this foolish notion of the disbelievers as per which they deny the Hereafter and regard it to be a mere thought; this great mercy of God will manifest itself and on that day his opponents will realize their wretchedness. It is evident from the Qur'ān that the Hereafter is actually a necessary consequence of God's attribute of mercy and its real purpose would be to reward the believers for their sacrifices and selfless behaviour. Readers are advised to read what we have written while explaining verse 12 of Sūrah al-An'ām.

وَلَئِنۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا رِيۡحًا فَرَاَوۡهُ مُصۡفَرًّا لَّظَلُّوۡا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ يَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۱﴾ [42]

This is a comment on verses 48-49 above. The implication is that generally people despair in a very short while and rejoice in a short while. If there is a

41. So, observe the signs of God's mercy: how He enlivens the land after its death. Indeed, it is He who gives life to the dead and He has power over all things.

42. And if We let loose on them another wind so that they see their crops grow pale, then they will turn to disbelief after this.

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little delay in rain, they loose hope and as soon as the downpour comes they dance with joy. And if after rain God sends unfavourable winds which adversely affect their blooming cultivated lands, ingratitude and despair will return to them. The implication is that there is no use for the Prophet (sws) to expect anything good from such fickle-minded people. His messages will only be understood by those who have the temperament to be grateful when blessed with favours and to be patient in times of difficulties.

I have delineated the difference between رِيَاحٌ and رِيحٌ at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The former is mostly used for favourable winds and winds conducive to the weather. The latter is generally used for winds that bring calamities. The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in فَرَاَوْهُ is زَرْعٌ or a word of similar meaning. An indication of this is found in the previous verse because the words يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا mean "the earth springing to life after death."

فَاِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتٰى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَآءَ اِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِ الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ تُسْمِعُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾[43]

The implication of this verse is that spiritually dead are those who are so fickle-minded that they vacillate between despair and arrogance in short periods of time and who in spite observing so many signs of God are not convinced. Such people are deaf and blind. It is neither possible for the Prophet (sws) to talk to such blind, deaf and blind people and make them understand the truth nor is it his responsibility. There is an indication in the words وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَآءَ اِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ that even the deaf could be expected to have some ability to hear if they turn in the direction of the caller but what good can be expected from the deaf who turn on their heals and run away. The preposition عَنْ in وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِ الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ evidences that the meaning of turning away is encompassed in the expression. The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) cannot bring the blind back to the right path from their ill-ways. In the words اِنْ تُسْمِعُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا those of God's signs found within and outside human beings towards which attention is directed to with full detail earlier. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is being told that his words can only influence those who believe in the signs of God's power, mercy and justice that are spread far and wide around them. There is simply no use inviting those who do not believe in these signs.

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43. So, you can neither make the dead hear your call nor the deaf while they walk turning away from you. You can also not lead the blind away from their error. You can only make those listen who believe in Our revelations. Thus it is they who are obedient.

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The words فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ refer to the fact that those who observe, understand and believe in the signs around them and those within them will indeed understand the Prophet's (sws) call and will submit to God in this regard.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ ضُعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضُعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضُعْفًا وَّ شَیْبَةً ؕ یَخْلُقُ مَا یَشَآءُ ۚ وَ هُوَ الْعَلِیْمُ الْقَدِیْرُ ﴿۵۴﴾[44]

Now at the end a warning is issued: no one should show conceit on his or her strengths, abilities, means and resources. Whatever a person receives is from God and it returns to Him as well. People should reflect on their existence: God creates them in the form of a very weak and frail infant. After this frailty, He blesses them with the strength and abilities of youth. In the next stage, weakness returns to them when they grow old. No one has the power to sustain his youth and strength. It is in the control of God alone to create whatever He wants. He has knowledge of everything and also has power on everything.

وَ یَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ یُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ۙ مَا لَبِثُوْا غَیْرَ سَاعَةٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كَانُوْا یُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[45]

This is a second warning: the life of this world should not be regarded as very long. On the Day of Judgement, when the wrongdoers will be raised to life, they will swear and say to one another that they have not spent more than an hour. The implication is that today these people feel secure that even if there is a Day of Judgement, there are many phases that must elapse before it arrives. Thus they still have to pass through the phases of life, death, *barzakh* and resurrection. They reckon that why should they be worried of it now and ruin all their pleasures. Yet the day they will be raised to life they will think that all these phases have passed in the blink of an eye.

The words كَذٰلِكَ كَانُوْا یُؤْفَكُوْنَ imply that these foolish people never had the inkling to estimate the facts. On the Day of Judgement, they will see as if all their past had vanished in the blink of an eye. Yet when they remained in this world, they regarded the phases of life, death and resurrection to be so long that they never felt the need to worry about them.

وَ قَالَ الَّذِیْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَ الْاِیْمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِیْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ اِلٰى یَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ ۚ فَهٰذَا یَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَ لٰكِنَّكُمْ

44. It is God Who has created you weak; then blessed you with strength after weakness and after strength gave you weakness and old age. He creates whatever He intends and He is all-knowing and all-powerful.

45. And the day, the Day of Judgement arrives, the wrongdoers will swear that they did not stay but for an hour. In this way, their intellects have been faltering.

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كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾[46]

The expression أُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْإِيْمَانَ refers to those people whose intellect remained sound in this world and they were blessed with the knowledge of God's revelations and faith in Him and in the Hereafter. These people will check the wrongdoers on their senseless tirade and tell them that their estimate is totally wrong. According to the Book of God, they have remained till the Day of Judgement, which today stares at them but they have not been aware of this. The words فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ refer to the register of God in which everything is written. The words وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ allude to the fact that these people regarded it to be merely a figment of imagination and would not give it any importance. It is evident from this that those who recognize the importance of their life and lead it while keeping the Hereafter in consideration will not be overcome with anxiety and nervousness on the Day of Judgement. On the contrary, they will think that they have reached the final destination of the journey of life in accordance with God's prescribed plan.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾[47]

The word إِسْتِعْتَابٌ has been explained at another place in this exegesis. The implication is that on that day no person's apology will be of any avail to him nor will anyone be given the opportunity to try to please his Lord. Such behaviour can only be of benefit in this world. He who did not take advantage of this opportunity will never get it again. Whoever wants to prepare himself for the final day should do it today because he will not have another chance to say that he did not get the time to prepare himself.

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِيْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ؕ وَلَئِنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ لَّيَقُوْلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا مُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾[48]

The expression ضرب مثل is originally used to convey a wise counsel in the form of a parable but in its wider connotation it also means to merely convey a wise counsel. I have discussed this idiom at another place in this exegesis.

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46. And those who have been given knowledge and faith will say: "According to the register of God, you have stayed till the Day of Judgement. So, this is the day of resurrection but you did not know."

47. Thus on that day the pleas of those who were unjust to themselves will be of no avail nor will they be asked to please God.

48. And We have cited all kinds of parables in this Qur'ān for people. And whatever sign you bring to these people, those who have disbelieved will say: "You are absolute liars."

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This verse addresses the Prophet (sws) and informs him that whatever counsel and advice are needed to make people understand have all been stated in this Qur'ān. So he should present these before them and remember that if they do not understand through this book, then whatever great a miracle he shows them, the disbelievers will only regard it to be false and a trick that he has played.

كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾[49]

The implication is that God seals the hearts of those who deprive themselves of the faculties of head and heart and are not ready to listen to and understand what is reasonable.

فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلَا يَسْتَخِفَّنَّكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾[50]

The word استخفاف means to discard the views of someone by regarding them to be flimsy and weak.

Now here, at the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured in very emphatic words to adhere to his stance. The promise God has made with him regarding help and success in this world and the next is bound to be fulfilled. Let not people who do not believe in God's promises prove him frail and unimportant by making fun of him. The implication is that if he sticks to his message and views, these people will stand humiliated and unsuccessful themselves; all their endeavours to uproot him will end up in failure.

With these lines, the exegesis of this *sūrah* stands completed. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so, gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād
Saturday
22nd June 1974

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49. In this manner, God seals the hearts of those who do not want to know.

50. So, be patient. Indeed, the promise of God is certain to be fulfilled. And let not those who do not have conviction prove you weak.

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Sūrah Luqmān

Central Theme and Relationship with Previous Sūrah

Like the two previous *sūrahs* (al-'Ankabūt and al-Rūm), the Qur'ānic name of this one too is Alif Lām Mīm. This is an indication of the fact that the central theme and subject of these *sūrahs* are broadly similar. The introductory part of this *sūrah* is similar to Sūrah al-Baqarah and the Qur'ānic name of Sūrah al-Baqarah is also Alif Lām Mīm. In the introductory part of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the type of people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān and those would not were delineated. Similarly, in the introductory part of this *sūrah* too, those who will benefit from this mercy of God and those who will remain deprived of it are pointed out.

In the previous *sūrah*, it was stated that this Qur'ān is inviting people to this religion based on the nature on which God has created man. Arguments were also presented on this claim from the world around man and that within him. In this *sūrah*, besides arguments drawn from the world around man and that within him, the counsel of Luqma#n, a famous sage of Arabia is alluded to. The purpose is to explain to the Arabs that wise people of the past have also guided people in way the Prophet (sws) is guiding them today. It is evident from this that common sense is in absolute line with what the Qur'ān has mentioned and not what is advocated by the opponents of the Qur'ān. This is very clear evidence to the fact that the nature on which God has created man is precisely the one found in man today. Had this not been the case, how could these people of insight reached the facts stated by the Qur'ān.

It may be kept in mind that when western philosophers discuss morality, they base it on established universal principles founded on common sense. However, they have not been able to tell us about the origins of these established moral principles. The reason is that they want to evade the concept of a wise creator and of the nature on which God created man. The punishment that God gave them for evading this reality was that their moral philosophy was left with no

basis or foundation. All their philosophical endeavours could neither formulate a barometer for good and evil nor could they tell why man should do good and resist evil. All ideologies like good is what is useful, good is what creates happiness, hedonism, obligation as end to itself they invented all proved to be baseless and they themselves proved them to be unfounded. The Qur'ān has not only based its morality but also the whole of religion on nature and since this nature is made by a wise creator, it is not permitted that people deviate from it. He who deviates from his nature, will lead himself to ruin and anger his creator. Man's nature is a treasure trove of guidance; yet he can deviate from the path of truth by being influenced by his environment. He can also go against his nature by misusing his authority. For this reason, the Almighty has explicated all the details of guidance found in human nature through His prophets and books so that no confusion may remain for anyone. It would provide opportunity to everyone to tread the path of guidance found in his nature and attain success in this world and God's pleasure in the next.

As referred to earlier, the reason that the Qur'ān has referred to the wisdom of the sage Luqmān in this *sūrah* is that it wants to present the evidence in its favour of a person who has reflected on the realities of life. Moreover, he was a person who was regarded highly by the opponents of the Qur'ān. At the same time, this *sūrah* presents the arguments in favour of the Qur'ān's call drawn from the world around and within man in a new style.

Analysis of the *Sūrah*

Verses (1-11): This book is a wise book which has been revealed for the guidance of people and as a mercy to them. However, only those people will benefit from it who keep alive the traits of their nature and also make use of them. As for those who give preference to the nonsensical talk of its opponents over the Qur'ān and also arrogantly evade it, they shall be meted out a humiliating punishment as a result of this arrogance. Only the believers will succeed. This is a certain promise of God because whatever is in the heavens and the earth and in between them are creatures of God. No one else has any say in it. Those who claim so, should show what their deities have created.

Verses (9-12): A reference to the counsel of Luqmān for his son. The purpose is to show that the person whose wisdom the Arabs were proud of and whose traditions existed in their literature, he too

counseled his on to things which this wise book is counseling them to. This shows that common sense is in harmony with the Qur'ān's call. Those who are opposing it are in fact waging war against common sense and human nature. There is a special warning in this for people who in those times were oppressing their sons to leave Islam, as has been mentioned in Sūrah 'Ankabūt. It is as if the Qur'ān is showing that the very things regarding which Luqmān affectionately counseled his son to adopt are the ones in which today's fathers are persecuting their sons.

Verses (20-24): What is said in the introductory part of the *sūrah* is substantiated: all internal and external favours enjoyed by man are actually gifts of God and no one can deny this fact. However, in spite of this, many foolish people are disputing the concept of monotheism whereas they neither have any argument in their favour nor any guidance from a sage or a prophet or the light of a divine scripture. When they are asked to follow the Book of God, they arrogantly reply that they will continue to follow the ways of their forefathers even if their forefathers followed Satan. The strong rope of God's attachment is only in the hands of those who follow the Book revealed by Him. This is because the judgement of all matters finally rests with God. At the end of this section, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not fret over such arrogant people. One day God will show them the consequences of their deeds.

Verses (25-30): Opponents of the Qur'ān are refuted by referring to their objections: they are evading the necessary consequences of what they believe in. They confess that the heavens and the earth are created by God. So the question is that when He is the creator, how can someone else be worthy of worship and gratitude? Everything is in His hands and He does not need anyone. He does not require the help of anyone and He has all worthy attributes. Hence no one's intercession is needed to win His favour. There are so many signs of His power and wisdom found in this universe that if all the trees become pens and all the seas together with seven more become ink, it is still not possible to note down all these signs. It is as easy for Him to create every human being as it is easy for Him to create a single soul. The night and day are subservient to Him, and He is fully aware of everything. If anyone else had a say in the matters of this universe, it would be have been totally destroyed.

Verses (31-34): The opponents of the Qur'ān are warned: should they be those who became happy in one instant and hopeless in another? On the contrary, they should show patience in strife and gratitude in comfort. The favours they enjoy today entail that they show gratitude to God and should remember the day when neither a father will be of any benefit to his son nor a son to his father. The Day of Judgement is bound to come. It cannot be denied merely on the basis that its time of arrival is not known. There are so many realities of life whose time of arrival is not known to anyone, yet no person can deny them. Real knowledge rests with God alone.

Section 1: Verses (1-11)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿۱﴾ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ ﴿۲﴾ ہُدًی وَّ رَحۡمَۃً لِّلۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ الَّذِیۡنَ یُقِیۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوۃَ وَ یُؤۡتُوۡنَ
الزَّکٰوۃَ وَ ہُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَۃِ ہُمۡ یُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ اُولٰٓئِکَ عَلٰی ہُدًی مِّنۡ رَّبِّہِمۡ وَ اُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَ مِنَ
النَّاسِ مَنۡ یَّشۡتَرِیۡ لَہۡوَ الۡحَدِیۡثِ لِیُضِلَّ عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ بِغَیۡرِ عِلۡمٍ ۖ وَّ یَتَّخِذَہَا ہُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ لَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ
مُّہِیۡنٌ ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِ اٰیٰتُنَا وَلّٰی مُسۡتَکۡبِرًا کَاَنۡ لَّمۡ یَسۡمَعۡہَا کَاَنَّ فِیۡۤ اُذُنَیۡہِ وَقۡرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرۡہُ بِعَذَابٍ
اَلِیۡمٍ ﴿۷﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَہُمۡ جَنّٰتُ النَّعِیۡمِ ﴿۸﴾ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَا ؕ وَعۡدَ اللّٰہِ حَقًّا ؕ وَ ہُوَ
الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۹﴾ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَیۡرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوۡنَہَا وَ اَلۡقٰی فِی الۡاَرۡضِ رَوَاسِیَ اَنۡ تَمِیۡدَ بِکُمۡ وَ بَثَّ فِیۡہَا
مِنۡ کُلِّ دَآبَّۃٍ ؕ وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَنۡۢبَتۡنَا فِیۡہَا مِنۡ کُلِّ زَوۡجٍ کَرِیۡمٍ ﴿۱۰﴾ ہٰذَا خَلۡقُ اللّٰہِ فَاَرُوۡنِیۡ
مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖ ؕ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ فِیۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ ﴿۱۱﴾

This is Alif Lām Mīm. These are the verses of the Wise Book, revealed as guidance and mercy for those who are thorough. For those who are diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and it these people who have conviction in the Hereafter. It is they who are on the guidance provided by their Lord and it is they who will succeed. (1-5)

There are some among people who give preference to absurd things to lead astray from the path of God, without any knowledge and make fun of the revelations of God. It is for such people that there is a humiliating punishment. And when Our revelations are recited to them, they arrogantly evade them as if they never heard them: as

though their ears were deaf. So give them glad tidings of a woeful punishment. But those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds, for them shall be gardens of delight, where they shall dwell forever. This promise of God is bound to be fulfilled: And He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (6-9)

He made the heavens without pillars that you can see, and set firm mountains on the earth lest it slither away together with you. And He dispersed upon it all kinds of living beings. And We sent down water from the sky; thus We created various sorts of beneficial things. (10)

All these things have been created by God. So, now show Me what they have created other than these. In fact, these wrongdoers are in a manifest error! (11)

Explanation

[1] الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾

A comprehensive discussion on the isolated letters (*ḥurūf-i muqaṭṭa'āt*) was done in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

[2] تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةً لِّلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾

The antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun تِلْكَ is الٓمّٓ. This is the Qur'ānic name of the *sūrah*. The implication is that this *sūrah* is based on the revelations of Book replete with wisdom; however, not every person truly recognizes pearls of wisdom. Only those will duly recognize and value it who are مُحْسِنِ. This word refers to people who do everything in a befitting way and who have correctly used their powers of intellect and kept alive the traits of their nature and whatever step they took was taken to the best of their insight. The verse states that it is for such people that the revelations of God are guidance and mercy. They will receive guidance from these revelations in this world and they will become a source of mercy and blessings for them in the next. I have already discussed the word مُحْسِنِ at an appropriate place of this exegesis and it also occurs in verse 22 ahead. God willing, there it shall be explained further. It is evident

1. This is Alif Lām Mīm.

2. These are the verses of the Wise Book, revealed as guidance and mercy for those are thorough.

from this verse that if these people are not giving due regard to this Book, then this is not because the Book itself has some flaw – rather it is these people whose nature is perverted. Hence, the Prophet (sws) should not become dejected by the attitude of these people.

الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾[3]

This verse expresses the qualities of the upright and thorough people referred to in the previous verse. As a result, people who in those times in whom these traits manifested themselves have come to the fore. It is stated that it is these people who are diligent in their prayer and vigilant in giving *zakāh* and have conviction in the Hereafter.

The words وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ highly praise these believers. In other words, it is these people who are fully convinced of the Hereafter. It is the consequence of this conviction that they have the urge to be diligent in their prayer and *zakāh.* It is evident from this that those who are indifferent to the prayer and *zakāh* are in fact deprived of the conviction in the Hereafter. And if they make this claim, then they are lying about it.

اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾[4]

This verse states that it is these people who in this world are on the right path and it is these who will succeed in the Hereafter. All the rest are in error and shall be flung into Hell in the Hereafter.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿۶﴾[5]

The word إِشْتَرَاء also means to give preference, as has been explained at relevant places in this exegesis. The expression لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ is much similar in construction to زخرف القول used in the Qur'ān

3. For those who are diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and it these people who have conviction in the Hereafter.

4. It is they who are on the guidance provided by their Lord and it is they who will succeed.

5. There are some among people who give preference to absurd things to lead astray from the path of God, without any knowledge and make fun of the revelations of God. It is for such people that there is a humiliating punishment.

(6:112). Here this expression is used in opposition to the revelations of the wise Book. Hence it would refer to all those things which the miscreants of those times would spread in order to lead people away from the revelations of God. The Qur'ān wanted people to face the real facts of life but its opponents wanted its addressees to remain entangled in the foolish things they were occupied with. The verse refers to this situation and expresses wonder. The implication is that the Almighty revealed a Book replete with wisdom in order to guide people. However, such is the pathetic situation of people that they are giving preference to those baseless concepts which provide corroboration to their desires and innovations.

The word علم in لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا means "a clear proof or argument." This word also occurs in verse 30 ahead. It will be further explained there. The implication is that the evil efforts of the miscreants are meant to stop people from God's way. The fact of the matter is that they have no sound proof of the path they are treading by leaving the path of God and which they also want people to tread. In spite of this, such is their audacity that they make fun of God's revelations and provide exaggerations to support their baseless notions.

Consider next the words: اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ. Earlier it was stated about the believers that "they are on guidance and they shall succeed." Now, these words, in contrast, state the fate of people who in opposition to the wise verses of the Qur'ān were busy in spreading their baseless notions, erroneous concepts and religious innovations. The words say that a very humiliating punishment awaits them. This is because in opposition to the truth their bias is towards arrogance and the punishment of arrogance before God is humiliation. It should be kept in mind that punishments are of various types. Though each punishment is a punishment – and may God protect everyone from it – but the worst punishment is the one which humiliates and disgraces people.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا وَلّٰى مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَاَنَّ فِيْٓ اُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ۝[6]

This is a picture of the arrogance that has made these people

6. And when Our revelations are recited to them, they arrogantly evade them as if they never heard them: as though their ears were deaf. So give them glad tidings of a woeful punishment.

worthy of this humiliating punishment. The verse states that such is the situation of these people that when God's revelations are recited to them, they turn their backs with great arrogance and walk away, as if they did not even hear them and as if both their ears are deaf. In other words, they regard God's revelations to be totally insignificant and not worthy to pay heed to. The verse states that if their arrogance has increased so much that God's revelations are not worthy enough to pay heed to, then the Prophet (sws), on God's behalf, should sound them glad tidings of a painful doom. The implication is that if this matter relates only to indifference, it can be reformed through reminding and admonishing them. However, if they show arrogance even after being reminded and admonished, then this ailment cannot be cured. Such people will become the fuel of Hell.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ النَّعِيمِ ۝٨ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝٩[7]

These verses, in contrast, state the reward of people who profess faith in God's revelations and befittingly follow them in their lives. It is said that for such people are gardens of bliss in which they will dwell forever. The words وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا mean that this is a certain promise of God that is bound to be fulfilled. The style of double emphasis found in this sentence has been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The reason for this double emphasis was that in verse 6 earlier, it has been said that these arrogant people make fun of God's revelations. It is obvious that this ridicule was directed at those verses of the Qur'ān in which the helpless and poor among the Muslims of those times were given glad tidings of an eternal kingdom. It was this reason that entailed that it be said with full stress and emphasis that if these people want to ridicule this aspect, then let them do so; however, the believers should rest assured that this promise of God will be fulfilled.

The words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ substantiate the certainty of God's promise through His attributes. The implication is that if God does not punish the arrogant and the oppressors and not reward the believers and the

7. But those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds, for them shall be gardens of delight, where they shall dwell forever. This promise of God is bound to be fulfilled: And He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

righteous, it would mean that He is neither powerful (الْعَزِيْزُ) nor wise (الْحَكِيْمُ). On the other hand, God forbid, He is a helpless and feeble being who has created a purposeless and meaningless world. The fact is that this is self-evidently untrue. I have explained this style of reasoning at various places in this exegesis. Readers should content themselves with this brief allusion.

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿۱۰﴾[8]

This verse directs attention to those signs of this universe observing which even a person of average intellect will be compelled to confess that the creator of this universe is الْعَزِيْزُ ie. has power and dominance over everything, and together with power every action of His reflects His immense wisdom as well. The verse states that it is God's power and wisdom that He has raised high this great roof of the heavens without any visible pillars. At the same time, He has set mountains firmly on the earth so that the earth might not reel away to one side with its inhabitants. Moreover, below this roof and above this earth, God has spread living beings of various sorts and to nourish and nurture them has rained down water from the skies. Through this water sprung forth many beneficial things from the earth.

In the expression بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا, the تَرَوْنَهَا qualifies عَمَدٍ. In other words, this great roof has been raised high by its great creator with pillars but such is the miracle of His power, wisdom and creativity that these pillars are not visible. He has bound together the various portions of this universe with such laws of gravity which are seen only by Him.

In the expression زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ the precise linguistic meaning of the word كَرِيْمٍ is "beneficial." This expression alludes to God's mercy and providence coupled with His power already alluded to. The implication is that after building this enormous palace and this pillar-less castle, He has provided its inhabitants with huge amounts of

8. He made the heavens without pillars that you can see, and set firm mountains on the earth lest it slither away together with you. And He dispersed upon it all kinds of living beings. And We sent down water from the sky; thus We created various sorts of beneficial things.

beneficial things.

هٰذَا خَلْقُ اللّٰهِ فَاَرُوْنِيْ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ۭ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١١﴾[9]

The implication of this verse is that all the above pointed things have been made by God and the addressees of this verse also admit this fact. They are now asked that what has been made by those who they worship besides God. What is the feat these deities have accomplished that they have regarded them to be partners in the rights of God.

The words بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ express pity on such people by addressing them in an indirect way: these people who have transgressed against their souls do not have any reason to regard such deities as partners of God; they are engulfed in manifest error.

Section II: Verses (12-19)

The succeeding verses refer to the wisdom of Luqmān and the advise he gave to his obedient son. The purpose of citing it, as alluded to earlier, is to show to the Arabs that their own sages and wise men taught them the very things which this Book of wisdom is teaching them. However, it is the wretchedness and deprivation of these people proud of blindly following their forefathers who themselves blindly followed Satan, yet they are not prepared to benefit from the wisdom of those forefathers who seriously reflected on the realities of life and through their words and deeds left behind very noble traditions. Such was the consequence of this foolishness of these people that they cruelly punish their children for doing things which Luqmān in his times earnestly taught to his child.

Who was Luqmān? Some people regard him to belong to Abyssinia. However, in my opinion, this is not correct. The historian Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq says that he belonged to the lineage of Abraham (sws). This opinion also does not seem to be sound. Among the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* poets Ṭarfah ibn ‘Abd and Salmā ibn

9. All these things have been created by God. So, now show Me what they have created other than these. In fact, these wrongdoers are in a manifest error!

Rabī‘ah have mentioned him and his tribe in their poetry. It is evident from these poems that Luqmān and his people lived in Yemen in grandeur and majesty, and they were the descendents of the ‘Ād.

Some people have regarded Luqmān to be a prophet. However, the opinion of the majority is that he was not a prophet. He was, in fact, a sage. It comes to my mind that some poets have also referred in their poetry to this counsel mentioned in the Qur’ān. However, while writing this exegesis I do not have the relevant poetry anthologies; hence, I cannot say anything with certainty in this regard.

Some historians regard him to be a king. Whether this is true or not, he does seem to be a chief. The way the *jāhiliyyah* poets have mentioned him shows that he was the patriarchal head of his tribe in Yemen. It is also evident from the advice and counsel he gave to his son that they were imparted to him at the time when he was being crowned as the next tribal chief. This shall be explained later. Readers are advised to study the verses in the light of this background.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ﴿۱۲﴾
وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ
بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ؕ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَاِنْ
جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا ۪ وَّاتَّبِعْ
سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ يٰبُنَيَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ
مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِيْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِي الْاَرْضِ يَاْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱۶﴾ يٰبُنَيَّ
اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَلَا
تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَاقْصِدْ فِيْ
مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ ؕ اِنَّ اَنْكَرَ الْاَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيْرِ ﴿۱۹﴾

And We bestowed wisdom on Luqmān, saying: “Be grateful to God and he who remains thankful remains so for himself. And he who is ungrateful then God is self-sufficient and has all praiseworthy attributes.” (12)

And recall when Luqmān while counselling his son said: “Son! Do not associate partners with God. Indeed, polytheism is a great transgression.” (13)

And We have counselled man regarding his parents. His mother bore him with sorrow upon sorrow, and he is weaned after two years. [We counselled him:] "Show gratitude to Me and to your parents and towards Me is the return. If they force you to associate anything with Me about which you have no proof, do not listen to them and be kind to them in this world, and follow the way of those who turn to Me. Then to Me shall you return, and I will inform you of what you have been doing." (14-15)

My son, if an act is of the size of a mustard seed, God will it bring forth even if it is in a mountain pass or in the heavens or the earth. Indeed, God is very Discerning and all-Knowing. (16)

My son! Be diligent in the prayer, enjoin good, and forbid evil and beare with patience any calamity that befalls you. Indeed, these things are from among the matters of endurance. (17)

And do not treat men with disdain, nor walk arrogantly. God does not like the arrogant and the conceited. And be modest in your gait and keep your voice low. Indeed, the most hideous of voices is the braying of the ass.

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ﴿١٢﴾[10]

The first consequence of wisdom is being grateful to God. The foremost effect of this treasure bestowed to a person by God is that he becomes thankful to his Lord. It is this gratitude which is the basis of all the rights of God and all the rights of human beings. I have written in detail on this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah Fātiḥah. Useful references to it have also been made while discussing the accounts of David (sws), Solomon (sws) and Dhū al-Qarnayan. It is evident from this that the first sign from which a wise person can be recognized is that he shows gratitude to God. Without it, he is totally hollow even if he is regarded to be a pioneer of knowledge and philosophy.

Consider next the verses وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ. They form an appropriate on the spot insertion. The implication is that no one should think that if the Almighty has asked His creatures

10. And We bestowed wisdom on Luqmān, saying: "Be grateful to God and he who remains thankful remains so for himself. And he who is ungrateful then God is self-sufficient and has all praiseworthy attributes."

to be grateful or likes this attitude, then there is some benefit for Himself in this. If the Almighty recommends this, then it is only for the benefit of people themselves. He who remains thankful to God will see that God's favours on Him will increase in this world and the next. As far as God Himself is concerned, He is totally self-sufficient. Neither is the gratitude of a person beneficial to Him nor is someone's ingratitude harmful to Him. At the same time, He is حَمِيْدٌ (Ḥamīd) which means that He possesses all lofty attributes and all these attributes are personal. No one can increase or decrease them. One aspect of this attribute is that whether any person duly values God's favours or not, he is not deprived by God of His favours and sustenance. This attribute is referred to in verse 26 ahead as well. It shall be explained there further.

وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۳﴾[11]

Just as the foremost consequence of wisdom is gratefulness to God, similarly the true essence of gratitude is abstinence from polytheism. A person receives all favours from God; hence, just as it is essential that he be grateful to God, it is equally essential that he should not ascribe the favours of God to others. If a person receives any benefit from others, it is at the behest of God. Hence, it is only God Who should be thanked. Others have to be shown gratitude in subservience to God. The right of God is the greatest. If anyone associates others in this right, he is guilty of usurping the greatest of rights – and there is nothing more unjust than this.

It needs to be appreciated here that all these things were said by Luqmān when he was counseling his son. This shows the importance of the occasion and what is said itself: the statements were not given in a casual way; on the contrary, they were said on a specific occasion in an elaborate way as advice to his son and stressed upon him to strongly adhere to them. The purpose is to direct the attention of the addressees of the Qur'ān what a wise father teaches his son and what attitude is adopted by these people about their children – people who revered Luqmān.

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11. And recall when Luqmān while counselling his son said: "Son! Do not associate partners with God. Indeed, polytheism is a great transgression."

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ؕ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۙ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا ۟ وَّاتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[12]

These two verses are insertions from God within the verses of counsel from Luqmān. He had directed his son to be grateful to God but he did not mention his own right in this regard out of modesty. After mentioning the right of God, he moved to the mention of the Day of Judgement. This he stated out of respect and this only befitted his humble nature. However, after God, as per the norms of human nature, the greatest right on a person is that of the parents. For this reason, the Almighty Himself filled this vacuum left by Luqmān. The verses state that God has guided people about their parents. This guidance has already been mentioned in verse 8 of Sūrah ‘Ankabūt and also in Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl. At these places, I have explained that all prophets and books of God have unanimously taught people that after the right of God, it is essential to treat parents with kindness. Here, this teaching is mentioned in the next part of the verse اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ وَ لِوَالِدَيْكَ (that be grateful to Me and your parents). In other words, while being grateful to Him, the Almighty has also directed people to show gratitude to their parents. It is evident from this that after God, it is the parents who have the greatest right on a person. This is because it is they who bring him into existence and nourish him. There is no greater a right on a person regarding his fellow brethren than his parents. However, this right relates to gratitude and service and not to worshipping them. It has been explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis that the real essence of gratitude is fulfillment of promises. If this fulfillment does not exist, then expressing gratitude through the tongue is an absolutely baseless thing.

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12. And We have counselled man regarding his parents. His mother bore him with sorrow upon sorrow, and he is weaned after two years. [We counselled him:] “Show gratitude to Me and to your parents and towards Me is the return. If they force you to associate anything with Me about which you have no proof, do not listen to them and be kind to them in this world, and follow the way of those who turn to Me. Then to Me shall you return, and I will inform you of what you have been doing.”

The words وَاِنۡ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنۡ تُشۡرِكَ بِىۡ مَا لَيۡسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ فَلَا تُطِعۡهُمَا وَصَاحِبۡهُمَا فِى الدُّنۡيَا مَعۡرُوۡفًا express the fact that if the parents stress upon their children to associate anything as a partner with God without any knowledge, then they do not have this right. It is mandatory on the children to refuse obedience to them in this regard. I have discussed at many places in this exegesis the fact that polytheism has no arguments to substantiate itself. This is a permanent trait of polytheism because till now the proponents of polytheism have not been able to present any argument to corroborate it. On the other hand, every polytheist believes in God.

The words وَصَاحِبۡهُمَا فِى الدُّنۡيَا state that though children must not listen to their parents if they force them to polytheism but they still must treat them kindly in this world. Their needs should be met as far as possible. Children should also continue to pray to God for their guidance. Abraham (sws) continued to pray for his father until God stopped him from doing so. Total severing of relations with parents who are disbelievers is only allowed when a Muslim society in its collective capacity declares its acquittal from them and from their nation. This aspect has already been explained in Sūrah Tawbah.

Here one thing that needs consideration is that as far as gratitude and service are concerned, the children are directed to do so in the case of both the father and the mother. However, as far as sacrifices and labours are concerned, only those of the mother are enumerated. No reference is given to any sacrifice of the father. The words are: حَمَلَتۡهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهۡنًا عَلٰى وَهۡنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِىۡ عَامَيۡنِ (his mother bore him with sorrow upon sorrow). Here all the three phases of pregnancy, birth and suckling are referred to (though the mention of birth is suppressed because it is understood) and all these phases relate to the mother. It is evident from this that a mother has a greater right on her children than a father. It is on this verse that the narrative of the Prophet (sws) is based which says that the right of the mother is thrice that of a father.[13]

The words اِلَىَّ الۡمَصِيۡرُ warn people that everyone should bear in mind that at last finally everyone has to turn to God. If anyone shows any

13. Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī. *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, n.d.), 1974, (no. 2548).

slackness in showing gratitude to God and in fulfilling the rights of the parents, then he will be held accountable before God for this attitude.

The words وَّ اتَّبِعۡ سَبِيۡلَ مَنۡ اَنَابَ اِلَىَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ further stress upon the children that besides not obeying their parents in matters of polytheism they at all cost must follow the way of those who are tuned to God and not those who have left the path of God even if they are their parents. In Sūrah ‘Ankabūt, the statement of the parents about their children and those subservient to them has been cited thus: اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطَايَاكُم (۱۲:۲۹) (keep following Our path and We are responsible for bearing your burden, (29:12)). The verse under discussion criticizes this notion that it is not permissible to follow anyone who invites people to a path which is against the path of God. Only those people must be followed who follow God.

The words ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ are addressed to both parents and the children and has the element of both a warning and assurance in them. The implication is that one day every person will return to God, and he will be shown by God all the deeds he had done. If some parents by misusing the right granted to them by God force their children to abandon the path of God, they will be punished for it. On the other hand, if the children fully recognized the right of God together with the right of their parents and adhered to it in a steadfast way, they will be abundantly rewarded for this courage.

يٰبُنَىَّ اِنَّهَاۤ اِنۡ تَكُ مِثۡقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنۡ خَرۡدَلٍ فَتَكُنۡ فِىۡ صَخۡرَةٍ اَوۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ يَاۡتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيۡفٌ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۶﴾[14]

After the intervening verses from God, the counsel of Luqmān resumes from here. Earlier, Luqmān had urged his son to abstain from polytheism and to adhere to monotheism. It has also been explained at an appropriate instance in this exegesis that on the belief of monotheism rests all other beliefs. After monotheism, the second basic belief is that of the hereafter. The verse under discussion mentions that part of his counsel that relates to the hereafter. He

14. My son, if an act is of the size of a mustard seed, God will it bring forth even if it is in a mountain pass or in the heavens or the earth. Indeed, God is very Discerning and all-Knowing.

states: My son, if a good or evil deed of the size of a mustard seed is done by someone on a mountain or its passes or in the unfathomable atmosphere of the heavens or in the depths of the earth, wherever it is, God will it bring forth on the Day of Judgement. This is because God is very Discerning and all-Knowing.

It may be kept in mind that it is because of a lack of knowledge about the attributes of God because of which nations have been misled about monotheism and got involved in polytheism. It was this lack of knowledge that also accounted for many erroneous concepts about the Hereafter. For this reason, Luqmān reminded his son about the wise teachings of monotheism and the hereafter to fully set right his son's concepts about them.

The pronoun in اِنَّهَآ is the pronoun of *shā'n*. In such situations, a speaker uses a pronoun for a thing in his mind. Here this is antecedent is "knowledge of the size of the mustard seed." It is in deference to حَبَّةٍ that the feminine pronoun is used.

It not essential to regard صَخْرَة to mean "a stone." It can also refer to a mountain and its passes and this would be in conformity with linguistic principles of Arabic. I have translated this word keeping in view this fact. Al-Ṭabarī has also cited that one group of people interpret this word in this meaning.[15]

يٰبُنَيَّ اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۱۷﴾[16]

After teaching his son to show gratitude to God, this verse teaches him the results of this gratitude that should arise in a person's life. The first of these is the prayer. It is the foremost and the greatest manifestation of gratitude to God. All prophets of God and all divine religions unanimously have taught people to pray. The precise translation would be: "O my son! Be diligent in the prayer." It means that he should not only adhere to the prayer himself, but make arrangements for others also that they are able to offer the prayer and he should also urge others to prayer.

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15. See: Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tā'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 21 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1405 AH), 72-73.

16. My son! Be diligent in the prayer, enjoin good, and forbid evil and bear with patience any calamity that befalls you. Indeed, these things are from among the matters of endurance.

The words وَ اْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ express the second aspect of showing gratitude to God. It connects a person to his brethren. The prayer, on the other hand, connects a person to his Lord. The word مَعْرُوْف encompasses all things that relate to fulfillment of rights; for example, spending in the way of God, helping orphans, the destitute, neighbours and all other people in need and similar acts of kindness which are well known in every good society and which every person grateful to his Lord tries to do or should do.

The words وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ direct his son to abstain from things which are opposite to the *ma'rūf* (مَعْرُوْف). These, for example, include stinginess, usurpation of rights, injustice, breaking promises, conceit etc.

The words وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ imply that enjoining good and forbidding evil is not an easy way. When he starts to do these things, he will find that difficulties and hardships facing him at every step; if he does not exercise patience, he will not be able to take a single step ahead. If he has to succeed in this test, he must face all adversities with patience and perseverance.

The sentence اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ emphasizes what is said above: these tasks cannot be carried out half-heartedly. Only those people can accomplish them who stand up with full force and perseverance and put their life at stake to succeed in them. In Sūrah al-'Aṣr, it is precisely for this reason that showing steadfastness and patience on the truth is mentioned.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ ۝۱۸[17]

The expression تصعیر خد means to show indifference to people because of arrogance and haughtiness.

The word لِلنَّاسِ refers to the masses in particular, the poor and needy who are looked down upon by the rich.

In the earlier verses, the factors that make showing gratitude to God incumbent upon human beings were mentioned. Coming up is the mention of things which are contrary to this gratitude. As delineated at another place, humility is the manifestation of gratitude

17. And do not treat men with disdain, nor walk arrogantly. God does not like the arrogant and the conceited.

and the opposite of humility is arrogance. People who are mean become arrogant when they receive favours and look down upon those who are not their equals. Luqmān has stopped his son to adopt this attitude.

The words وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا also occur in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl. There a further admonition is sounded thus: (۳۷:۱۷) لَن تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا – meaning that however much a person tries to walk tall in this arrogance, he should not forget that he cannot pierce the earth or climb as high as the mountains. And what is the meaning of showing arrogance in the kingdom of God Whose signs of power and exaltedness everyone witnesses? The arrogance and conceit of a person is evident from his face and neck and also from his gait. Luqmān has stopped his son from being arrogant in both ways.

The words إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ are an admonition and a very strong one too. They mean that God does not like a person who is arrogant and haughty. People who are rich and have high status and who think that this is because of their own ability and entitlement and not a favour of God end up being arrogant instead of being grateful to God. Luqmān has informed his son of precisely this danger. He has asked him to regard favours to be God's gift and test and should not invite God's wrath by becoming conceited because of them.

وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِن صَوْتِكَ ۚ إِنَّ أَنكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ﴿١٩﴾ [18]

Stylistically, the earlier verse was a collection of forbiddance ordinances. In this verse, Luqmān has directed his son in a positive way to adopt humility: he should be very humble in his gait instead of walking in an arrogant way and be polite in his voice instead of being rude and discourteous. The occurrence of the word مِنْ here evidences the fact that God has not created mankind with the same pitch in their voices. He has given them the ability to raise this pitch and also lower it when needed. So he should use this ability as per this need and not always burden the ears of people with his voice. The words إِنَّ أَنكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ are meant to stop people from being coarse and impolite in their tone: when God has created them in the

18. And be modest in your gait and keep your voice low. Indeed, the most hideous of voices is the braying of the ass.

best of moulds and also blessed them with quality of eloquent speech, why should they fall from this status and become donkeys. It is their utter misfortune if they do this.

Though these pieces of advice from Luqmān are effective for every person; yet, they carry special significance for those who are in the position of leadership and have political authority. For this reason, as pointed out earlier, Luqmān was not merely a sage, he was a sage who was a ruler as well. He held political authority among his people. The advice given by him here to his son was meant to make him understand the responsibilities of leadership. Luqmān was not a prophet; however he does have a general resemblance with the prophet David (sws).

Section III Verses (20-34)

The foremost thing mentioned in the counsel of Luqmān is showing gratitude to God. In the succeeding verses, it is being explained as to why only God is worthy of being grateful to. What are the reasons for this found within man's being and around him? At the same time, the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience and perseverance: he should now consign their matter to God; He will decide about their fate; he should not pay heed to them if they are demanding signs. There are so many signs of God around them. If all the trees of the world become pens and all the seas with an addition of another seven become ink, even then all of God's signs cannot be written. These people have a habit of breaking promises and are traitors. When they are seized by circumstances, they promise to show obedience to God but when they are given respite, they return to their rebellious ways and forget their promises. No sign can work for such people who breach promises.

At the end, people are reminded of the Hereafter. People are asked to fear the day when neither a father will be of any use to any person nor his son; each person will be accountable for his own self. If today the time of arrival of the Day of Judgement is not known, then this should not deceive anyone that its threat is a mere bluff which has no basis. There are so many things whose time of appearance is not known to anyone but no sane person can deny them. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّ بَاطِنَةً ؕ وَ مِنَ
النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ لَا هُدًى وَّ لَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوْا مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
قَالُوْا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَ لَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ يَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَ مَنْ يُّسْلِمْ
وَجْهَهٗۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ هُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقٰى ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَ مَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا
يَحْزُنْكَ كُفْرُهٗ ؕ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۲۳﴾ نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ
نَضْطَرُّهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَ لَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَ لَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ
مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّ الْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ سَبْعَةُ اَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمٰتُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۷﴾
مَا خَلْقُكُمْ وَ لَا بَعْثُكُمْ اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۲۸﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ
وَ يُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَ سَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَ الْقَمَرَ ۙ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْۤ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَ اَنَّ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ الْبَاطِلُ ۙ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿۳۰﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ الْفُلْكَ
تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللّٰهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَ اِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ
مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ؕ وَ مَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا
كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿۳۲﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَ اخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِيْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ ۫ وَ لَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَازٍ
عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۪ وَ لَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَ لَئِنْ
سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ ۚ وَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْاَرْحَامِ ؕ وَ مَا تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا ؕ وَ مَا
تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌۢ بِاَيِّ اَرْضٍ تَمُوْتُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۳۴﴾

Do you not reflect that it is God Who has put in your service what is between the heavens and the earth and completed on you both visible and hidden favours? Yet there are still some who dispute about God, without knowledge or reasoning or any illuminating scripture. And when they are invited: "Follow what God has revealed," they reply: "We will not do this; we will only follow the ways of our forefathers." Even in the case when Satan invites them to the torment of Hell? (20-21)

He who obediently turns himself to God and also leads a befitting life has indeed held on to a strong rope. And finally all things have to

return to God. And let not the disbelief of those who disbelieve grieve you. To Us shall all of them return. So, We will inform them of whatever they would have done. God is also aware of the secrets of the hearts. We will provide them for awhile. Then We will shove them towards a grievous torment. (22-24)

If you ask them: "Who has created the heavens and the earth?" they will reply: "God did." Say: "Only God is worthy of gratitude." Yes most of them do not accept this. To God belongs what the heavens and the earth contain. Indeed, God alone is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes. (25-26)

And if all the trees of the earth become pens, and the sea, with seven more of them, become ink, even then the signs of God cannot be written down. Indeed, God is Mighty and Wise. (27)

To create you and give life to you is like creating and giving life to one person. Indeed, God hears and sees all. Have you not seen that it is God Who makes the night pass into the day and the day pass into the night and He has made the sun and the moon subservient to Him? Each is moving till an appointed time. And that God is aware of whatever you do. This is because God is the only true God and what they invoke besides Him are false. And indeed, God is the Most High, the Supreme. (28-30)

Have you not seen that it is through God's grace that a ship travels in the sea so that He make you observe His signs? Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who is steadfast and grateful. And when waves like canopies envelop them, they invoke God promising to obey Him alone. Thus, when He brings them to safety and takes them to the land, some of them remain guided and others go astray. And only they deny Our revelations who always break promises and are ungrateful. (31-32)

O People! Fear that God may seize you and fear the day when neither a father will be of any benefit to his children nor the children will be able to benefit their father. Indeed, the promise of God is certain to be fulfilled. So the life of the world should not deceive you nor should the deceiver deceive you about God. Only God has knowledge of the Hereafter and it is He Who sends down rain, and only He knows what is in the wombs and no one knows what he will earn tomorrow nor does anyone know in which land he will die. Indeed, God is all-knowing and all-aware. (33-34)

Explanation

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّ بَاطِنَةً ؕ وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ لَا هُدًى وَّ لَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾[19]

The introductory part of this *sūrah* ended on verse 11 on the words: هٰذَا خَلْقُ اللّٰهِ فَاَرُوْنِيْ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (All these things have been created by God. So, now show Me what they have created other than these. In fact, these wrongdoers are in manifest error!) After that, to reinforce what was said in them the counsel of Luqmān was mentioned. He had also urged his son to remain grateful to God alone. Now, in the verse under discussion, the subject is taken up again in the light of the signs found around man. The style adopted is that of amazement and rebuke. People are asked to reflect that all objects between the heavens and the earth that are serving them are put into this service for them by God. None of them can claim about any of them that they have been created by someone other than God. So on what basis have they associated partners with Him and worshipping them?

The actual meaning of the word اَسْبَغَ in وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّ بَاطِنَةً is "something which is wide and expansive." From here, it came to be used in the meaning of completion and perfection. Thus the words وَ اَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ would imply that God completed His favours on them in all aspects. These favours are apparent and material as well as intellectual and spiritual. One's appearance, physique, limbs, food, clothes and other similar things have been given by God and such favours as the faculties of hearing and sight, intellect and insight as well as guidance have also been blessed by Him. No person can claim about any of these favours that they have been given to him by someone other than God or that someone else can be their source. So when it is God Who provides people with all the favours, then it should only be He Who should be worthy of being grateful to. Hence, without any basis, how can a person be associated with Him

19. Do you not reflect that it is God Who has put in your service what is between the heavens and the earth and completed on you both visible and hidden favours? Yet there are still some who dispute about God, without knowledge or reasoning or any illuminating scripture.

in this right that He alone has.

The words وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ imply that as far as God and the right to be thankful to Him are concerned, these are established facts which no one dare denies. However, it is quite amazing that there are some wretched people who dispute about monotheism even though they have neither any argument in their favour nor any guidance nor the support of any illuminating scripture. The governing noun in يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ is suppressed. The Idolaters of Arabia did not disbelieve in God. They only disputed His oneness. The words بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ refer to a lack of reasoning whether its nature is logical or scriptural. These words occur in verse 6 as well. The word عِلْم is used in contrast to conjecture as well. Hence it refers to everything through which conviction and certainty can be achieved. The word هُدًى occurs with كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ which clearly indicates that this is a case of mention of the general before the specific. God's guidance has also reached His creatures through the oral teachings of the Prophets and through radiant scriptures like the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospels and the Qur'ān as well. In my opinion, the word هُدًى refers to reasoning based on the first type of teaching. It may be kept in mind that this negation of a lack of reasoning is negation of reality. What the Idolaters would say in support of their views is cited ahead. It is of the nature of blind following and mere blind following cannot be regarded as a form of reasoning.

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوْا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ يَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿۲۱﴾[20]

This is an explanation of their reasoning that lacks any basis: when they are called to follow the Book of God, they reply that they will follow what they found their forefathers following and that they are not prepared to accept anything that is not in conformity with it. The verse tells the Prophet (sws) to ask them that will they still adhere to this view even if Satan is calling them to Hell by making them biased in favour of blindly following their forefathers. The implication is

20. And when they are invited: "Follow what God has revealed," they reply: "We will not do this; we will only follow the ways of our forefathers." Even in the case when Satan invites them to the torment of Hell?

that it is not necessary for the veracity of something that it has been handed from the forefathers. It is possible that just as they are blindly following the ways of their forefathers and regarding them as religion, their forefathers too blindly followed as religion whatever they received from their own forefathers. Thus it is the requirement of wisdom and of likeness for the truth that they listen to the Book of God that they are being called to, reflect on it and evaluate their beliefs and deeds in the light of the arguments it proffers. If they do not do this, they might end up in Hell as a result of this blind prejudice and following the ways of Satan. Here it needs to be kept in mind that there is great attraction in nationalism whether it relates to religion, culture or traditions. Those who raise these slogans are considered as protectors of national culture and national traditions. The masses are so enamoured by their slogans that they are not prepared to listen to anything against them, even though it may be a great truth. In my opinion the antecedent of the accusative pronoun in يَدْعُوْهُمْ is not the forefathers but the speakers of these words.

وَمَنْ يُّسْلِمْ وَجْهَهٗٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقٰى ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۲۲﴾[21]

The word أَسْلَمَ occurs with the preposition لِ as well as with اِلَى in the Qur'ān. While deliberating on the instances in which they are used it is evident that in the first instance it is used to connote total submission and consignment which is the essence of Islam. In the second instance, as is the case here, it is used to humbly turn towards something or someone. This "turning to" can be literal as well as metaphorical. This is because it is qualified by the word مُحْسِنٌ. The word إِحْسان means to do something with utter perfection and sincerity. This qualification also determines the real meaning of Islam: a person turns to God and does so with full devotion and perfection and with great sincerity and faithfulness. This is contrary to the hypocrites who would take the name of God but would associate partners with Him in both His being and rights and instead of God and His directives give real importance to these partners and the

21. He who obediently turns himself to God and also leads a befitting life has indeed held on to a strong rope. And finally all things have to return to God.

rituals associated with them.

It may also be noted that this verse has been revealed in response to the proponents of polytheism and of those who blindly followed their forefathers. They are told that neither will blind following avail them nor will the support of deities be of any benefit to them. On the contrary, those who turn to God with full sincerity and piety have in fact held on to a strong rope that attaches them to their Lord. This rope will prove to be a special means of association for them with Him. It shall never break.

The words وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ sound a severe warning: no one should be in the misconception that the ropes they hold on to instead of this rope will be of any avail to them. None of these false supports will be of any benefit to them because all matters will one day be presented before God. No one except Him will be the Being who everyone will have to face in the Hereafter. No other support except Him will be there for them.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ كُفْرُهٗ ؕ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۲۳﴾[22]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and further augments the warning found in the previous verse for his enemies. He is told that those who are today opposing his calls should not grieve him; each of them will finally encounter God. On that day, He will bring before them all their misdoings.

The last part of the verse اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ implies that no one should remain in the misconception that it is difficult for God to be aware of the words and deeds of all the people of the world. Such is the profundity of His knowledge that He is even aware of the secrets found the heart of each person.

نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿۲۴﴾[23]

The preposition اِلٰى after the verb نَضْطَرُّ shows that the meaning of

22. And let not the disbelief of those who disbelieve grieve you. To Us shall all of them return. So, We will inform them of whatever they would have done. God is also aware of the secrets of the hearts.

23. We will provide them for awhile. Then We will shove them towards a grievous torment.

compulsion is incorporated in the expression. Examples of this style can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* as well. The implication is that no one should wrongly assume that the Hereafter is far fetched. The respite of this world is very limited. The verse states that it is of a few days. Here the Almighty will grant them His blessings for a few days and then force them to a painful torment. It needs to be kept in mind that in this world a person is bound by the laws of nature from which he cannot escape. The rich and the poor are equally helpless before them and every person has to obey these laws come what may.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾[24]

This verse states the reason that induces even the opponents to show gratitude to God. If they are asked about the creator of the heavens and the earth, they will answer that it is God. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that if they acknowledge God to be the creator of everything, then He alone is worthy of gratitude. How can it be logical to accede God to be the creator and then regard others to be worthy of gratitude – others who neither have any role in creating this universe nor governing it?

The words بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ imply that what they do is not based on any reasoning. The reality is that they are not even aware of the obvious consequences of the premises they readily believe in. The result of this ignorance is that they are denying the truth they acknowledge through other deeds and beliefs.

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٦﴾[25]

This verse expresses the actual reality: whatever is in the heavens and the earth are God's creations and subservient to Him alone. Everyone is dependent on Him. It is only He who does not need anyone and has all praiseworthy attributes. For this reason, only He is solely worthy of gratitude. No one other than Him has the status to

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24. If you ask them: "Who has created the heavens and the earth?" they will reply: "God did." Say: "Only God is worthy of gratitude." Yes most of them do not accept this. To God belongs what the heavens and the earth contain.

25. Indeed, God alone is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes.

be regarded an associate to Him in this obligation.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّ الْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ سَبْعَةُ اَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمٰتُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۷﴾[26]

What is stated in this verse, has already appeared in Sūrah Kahf in the following words:

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّيْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّيْ وَ لَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا (۱۰۹:۱۸)

Tell them: "If all the sea becomes ink to record the signs of my Lord, the sea will become dry before the signs of my Lord are recorded even if we bring forth as much more ink." (18:109)

The word كَلِمٰتُ refers to those signs of God which bear witness to His being and attributes and to His power and wisdom. Since every sign is a manifestation of God's command of *kun* (كُنْ) and every sign portrays itself through its very existence, the word كَلِمٰتُ is used for it. This term is in fact very meaningful for it. The implication is that God is not someone vague and unknown so that people get confused about Him and start worshiping whichever stone they come across. There are so many signs of God in this universe that if all the trees of the earth become pens and all the seas with a further addition of seven more become ink, even then all of them cannot be recorded in writing. All these signs show that the creator of this universe is powerful (عَزِيْزٌ) and wise (حَكِيْمٌ). Both these attributes of God have been explained at various instances in this exegesis. They are from among the basic attributes of God and in various verses of the Qur'ān the beliefs of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter are adduced from them. These three beliefs form the basic issues discussed by the Qur'ān. In other words, every object of this universe bears witness to the power and wisdom of God and the Qur'ān invites people to what these attributes entail.

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26. And if all the trees of the earth become pens, and the sea, with seven more of them, become ink, even then the signs of God cannot be writtem down. Indeed, God is Mighty and Wise.

In this verse, the word مِدَادٌ parallel to اَقْلَامٌ is suppressed. If this suppression is taken into consideration, the whole sentence would be: مَا فِی الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادٌ. Examples of such suppression have been highlighted in this exegesis at various instances.

While explaining the above cited verse of Sūrah Kahf, I have explained that what is stated is no exaggeration. It is a statement of fact. I had written there that if the sea turns into ink, then this ink will not even be sufficient to write the signs found in the sea let alone the signs of the whole universe. This earth below our feat is a very trivial part of God's unfathomable universe. However, in spite of all the advances of science, the status of all the signs and miracles man has been able to discover in it are not more than a drop in the sea.

مَا خَلْقُكُمْ وَلَا بَعْثُكُمْ اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۲۸﴾[27]

Stated here is the consequence and summary of all the premises stated above. When every object of this universe bears witness that its creator is powerful and wise, then what doubt remains in the fact that God will one day raise the dead from their graves. Since He is powerful, this task is not difficult for Him at all, and since He is wise it is the requisite of His wisdom that He do this. If He does not do this, how can He be regarded as powerful, and if He does not do it in spite of being able to do it, then this is against His wisdom. This is because without the Hereafter, this world becomes a place of amusement. This fact has been explained at many instances in this exegesis.

A governing noun is suppressed in اِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ. The actual impression is اِلَّا كَبَعْثِ نَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ or اِلَّا كَخَلْقِ نَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ. In other words, people should not think that who has the ability to create afresh so many creatures and gather them. The verse states that it is equal for the Almighty to create one soul and to create whole mankind. One command and one sound of the trumpet will be sufficient for the recreation of mankind. He has power over all things.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ state that the real purpose is to remind the addressees of their accountability: no one should be in the misconception that who can have knowledge about such a large

27. To create you and give life to you is like creating and giving life to one person. Indeed, God hears and sees all.

number of people so that their accountability is possible. The fact is that God hears and sees everything and nothing is beyond His knowledge and grasp. Hence, He will have no difficulty in taking account from people and in rewarding or punishing them.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوۡلِجُ الَّيۡلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَيُوۡلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيۡلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ۙ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡۤ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾[28]

Earlier in verse 20, the Almighty directed the attention of the addressees of this verse to His signs by using the plural form (اَلَمۡ تَرَوۡا). Here precisely the same has been done in the singular form (اَلَمۡ تَرَ). It has been pointed out in this exegesis that the address by this singular form is also used for plural forms. Here each and every entity of a group of people is addressed and carries more emphasis than the plural form itself.

The verse states that it is the power and wisdom of God that He causes the night to enter into the day and vice versa. The words also portray a picture of how vigilantly, diligently, persistently and punctually the night and day chase one another.

The words وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ۙ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡۤ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى refer to the fact that it is God's power and wisdom that He has put the sun and the moon into the service of man. Both follow their ordained paths very punctually. They dare not deviate from these paths or even be late by a second in the time they have to follow.

The purpose of directing attention to these signs is bring to fore the facts which have been mentioned earlier. The implication is that how do they imagine that the God Who has such profound signs of power will not be able to re-create them. Can anyone of His creations be regarded as His associate when it is He who has ordained the whole system of night and day and set the sun and moon on their ordained paths? Is there any possibility of this wrong estimation about someone who has shown such majestic signs of His providence – the wrong estimation that all this has been created without a purpose and

28. Have you not seen that it is God Who makes the night pass into the day and the day pass into the night and He has made the sun and the moon subservient to Him? Each is moving till an appointed time. And that God is aware of whatever you do.

that it will not culminate in a Judgement Day.

The words وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِيۡرٌ imply that if the addressees reflect on this system of providence and power, not the slightest doubt will remain that He Who is running this whole system can be unaware of them and their deeds. If He is not aware, how can He nurture and nourish them? And if He is aware, why will He not hold them responsible for observing their duties?

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡحَـقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهِ الۡبَاطِلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ الۡكَبِيۡرُ ﴿۳۰﴾[29]

The verse implies that the reason that this whole universe is based on such a meticulous and punctual system and the way it provides for the nourishment of its inhabitants is that only God is worthy of worship and He is the sole governor of its affairs. Had He have any partners who had a role in governing these affairs, then this whole system would have aborted as is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān by the words: لَوۡ كَانَ فِيۡهِمَاۤ اٰلِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (۲۱:۲۲) (If there were other deities besides God in the heavens and the earth, there would have been disorder in both, (21:22)). For this reason, all these deities that these people worship are fabrications.

The words وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ الۡكَبِيۡرُ refer to the fact that just as the system of this universe bears witness to the oneness of God, it also indicates that exalted and great is the person of God. It is a very small feat of His power that He brings forth the day from the night and lays the cover of night over the day; the sun and the moon are subservient to His command. The being who is so exalted and great is far beyond being associated partners with.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ الۡفُلۡكَ تَجۡرِىۡ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ بِنِعۡمَتِ اللّٰهِ لِيُرِيَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوۡرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾[30]

This verse directs the attention of the addressees by citing the example of a ship. They should not end up loosing hope and being overcome with arrogance in such a short span of time. On the

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29. This is because God is the only true God and what they invoke besides Him are false. And indeed, God is the Most High, the Supreme.

30. Have you not seen that it is through God's grace that a ship travels in the sea so that He make you observe His signs? Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who is steadfast and grateful.

contrary, they should show patience in this trial and express gratitude on their blessings. This is the path of peace and only by treading it will they succeed. On the contrary, since God has been kind to them at this time, they are showing arrogance. In reality, this is a temporary phase that they are enjoying. If God seizes them now for some blemish, all their inebriation will end and they will feel ashamed and repent on their doings. However, this repentance will only be temporary. As soon as life becomes comfortable for them, they will return to their ill-ways. They should seek a lesson from the circumstances encountered by the passengers of a ship. If a person wants to remain steadfast in trials and grateful in comfort, he can learn a lot from them.

وَ اِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ؕ وَ مَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿۳۲﴾[31]

This verse details out what is concisely stated in the previous verse: when a ship is sailing smoothly, its passengers do not even think that it is because God has provided it with propitious winds that has made their ship cut across the waves of the sea with such peace and calm. They regard this to be a result of their own ability and intelligence and become oblivious of God. Yet when suddenly stormy winds arise and huge waves engulf them, they remember God and invoke Him in every possible way and promise that in future they will remain obedient to Him. However, as soon as the ship reaches the coast very few of them adhere to their promise and adopt the middle path. Most of them turn out to be rebellious and ungrateful forgetting the signs of God and relapse into their previous wanderings.

After فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ the words to the effect وَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ كَافِرُوْن are suppressed. This suppression is unfolded by the later words: وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ. The word مُّقْتَصِدٌ refers to those who tread the path of truth and justice.

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31. And when waves like canopies envelop them, they invoke God promising to obey Him alone. Thus, when He brings them to safety and takes them to the land, some of them remain guided and others go astray. And only they deny Our revelations who always break promises and are ungrateful.

In the expression: وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ the word خَتَّارٍ is an exaggerated form of خَتْرٌ. It means someone who is unfaithful to the utmost and breaches promises in the most heinous way. These words are used in contrast to صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ of the previous verse. The word صَبَّار refers to people who remain steadfast on their covenant with God in all circumstances, and خَتَّار refers to people who remain indifferent to God when they receive His favours but in times of trial try to follow their covenant with God. Yet they adhere to this attitude as long as they encounter trials. As soon as they are over, they forget their promises with God. This is the most horrible form of rebellion against God. For such people, neither signs of God's favours nor any warning is effective.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَاخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِيْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ ۫ وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْـًٔا ۭ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۪ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿۳۳﴾[32]

This is the final warning: people should protect themselves from God's wrath and punishment and should keep fearing the day on which neither a father will be of any benefit to his children nor a son will be of any avail to his father. Each person will bear his or her own burden. The relationship between a father and a son is the closest. When they shall not be able to mutually benefit one another what to speak of others.

Here this style of the Qur'ānic verse should be noted that the meaning of "lack of benefit" has been conveyed in an emphatic manner. The words used are: وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنْ وَّالِدِهٖ شَيْـًٔا. Those who have a flare for the Arabic language know that the repetition of the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) and use of a noun in place of the verb has added a lot of stress in the sentence. In my opinion, the reason for this in the first place is that every father naturally expects from his son that in old age he will become his support and in the second place, a son with respect to his age and ability is more in a position to

32. O People! Fear that God may seize you and fear the day when neither a father will be of any benefit to his children nor the children will be able to benefit their father. Indeed, the promise of God is certain to be fulfilled. So the life of the world should not deceive you nor should the deceiver deceive you about God.

help his frail father than vice versa. In the third place, because of young age a son has stronger sentiments of honour and civility. Yet in spite of all these aspects such will be the situation of indifference on that day that a son will not be able to be of any benefit to his father.

Here, we may take into consideration the circumstances of the times in which this verse was revealed. I have indicated while explaining Sūrah ‘Ankabūt and verse 15 of this *sūrah* that in those times fathers would forcibly stop their sons from accepting Islam and for this the elderly argument they gave to their sons was that they should follow their ways for on the Day of Judgement they will be responsible to God for the good and bad deeds their sons did. This verse is refuting this notion.

The words اِنَّ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا imply that God’s promise is certain to be fulfilled. The Hereafter will come; hence the life of this world should not deceive them in this matter. Since this world is not based on the principle of reward and punishment and since good and evil both have been given respite in it and the adherents to evil seem to be more successful in this world, the foolish think that the threat of the Hereafter is a mere bluff. The verse states that this aspect should not cause any misconception. This world is a place of trials and tests.

The words وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ الۡغَرُوۡرُ imply that this deceptive state of affairs should not lure people into any misconception about God that He has made this world without a purpose and is not concerned with the good and evil found in it. If someone has reached this conclusion, then it is totally wrong. One day will finally come when the complete justice of God Almighty will manifest itself. On that day, people who are in these misconceptions will end up in severe regrets. In Sūrah Infiṭār, the words used to convey this very meaning are: يَاأَيُّهَا الۡاِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الۡكَرِيۡمِ (٦:٨٢) (O man! What is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord, (82:6))

The word غَرُوۡر is used not only for this deceptive world but also for Satan who deceives people. Here both these meanings are present. However, this much should be kept in mind that the words فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا allude to the deception one is led into viz a viz this world and the worlds وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ الۡغَرُوۡرُ refer to the deception which the foolish are led into viz a viz God. As far as the philosophy of religion

is concerned, these are the two deceptions which are the foundation of all deviations from the truth.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنۡدَهٗ عِلۡمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَ يُنَزِّلُ الۡغَيۡثَ ۚ وَيَعۡلَمُ مَا فِى الۡاَرۡحَامِ ؕ وَمَا تَدۡرِىۡ نَفۡسٌ مَّاذَا تَكۡسِبُ غَدًا ؕ وَمَا تَدۡرِىۡ نَفۡسٌۢ بِاَىِّ اَرۡضٍ تَمُوۡتُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيۡمٌ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۳۴﴾[33]

This verse is actually an immediate answer to a doubt or a question: whenever the opponents would be warned of the Day of Judgement, they would say: "when will it come? If it is to come, why has it not come as yet?" As a rejoinder to this question, it is said that only God knows its time of arrival. The lack of knowledge of the time of something cannot negate the existence that thing. There are so many aspects of life whose time and nature is not known but no sane person denies them. No one can deny the rain; yet its exact time and quantity and the place it comes to is not known to anyone. In these times, man has made many technological advancements and governments spend millions of rupees on the meteorological department yet the predictions of this department is mere conjecture and speculation. Similarly, no one can deny the pregnancy of a pregnant woman; yet what she will give birth to and when she will do so is only known to God. Likewise, no one knows that he will earn tomorrow, what obligations he will fulfill and in what circumstances and involvements he will lead his life. Such is the situation of the greatest of planners that they plan with great precaution and vigilantly abide by it; yet just as it is about to materialize a calamity strikes and ruins the whole program. What to speak of individuals, even governments plan with great care and confidence regarding the crops they will be producing the following year; yet change in weather conditions and rain disrupts their whole planning. Why go that far, the issue of life and death is very important for a person; yet who knows in which land he will die and where he will be buried. Many a time a person merrily leaves his house with only his corpse to return. At one place he is born, at

33. Only God has knowledge of the Hereafter and it is He Who sends down rain, and only He knows what is in the wombs and no one knows what he will earn tomorrow nor does anyone know in which land he will die. Indeed, God is all-knowing and all-aware.

another he lives and at still another place he dies. So when a person is not aware of such close-by realities – yet these are events no one can deny – how can the Day of Judgement become dubious if its time of arrival is not known?

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ state that God is the real knower and cognizant being. Only He knows when the Day of Judgement will come; yet it is sure to come. Each and every particle of this universe bears witness to its arrival.

On these lines ends the exegesis of this *sūrah*. و لله الحمد و المنة (all praise is for God; it is only His favour [we reap])

8 am Sunday
28th July 1974
Raḥmānābād

Sūrah Sajdah

Central Theme of the Sūrah and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Luqmān, the previous *sūrah*. There is no basic difference between the central themes of the two. Both share the same Qur'ānic name: Alif Lām Mīm. Both have similar introductory sections. Sūrah Sajdah begins with the statement that this Book has been revealed by God. By revealing it to the unlettered Arabs, the Almighty has done a great favour to them, as no warner had as yet come to them. They would be extremely ungrateful if, instead of giving it due importance, they claim that it has been falsely proclaimed as the Book of God; there is not the slightest doubt in it being the Book of God. After that, the discourse proceeds to validate the claims of the Qur'ān which were specially causing alarm in the minds of the opponents. At the end, the Torah is referred to by stating that a book similar to the Qur'ān was revealed to Moses (sws) which was opposed by the Pharaoh and his people and a very evil fate of this came before them. After this, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is assured that just as the bearers of the Torah achieved success after passing through many phases of patience, in a similar manner, he and his followers too will have to pass through some phases in which their patience will be tested. If they are successful in these phases, the ultimate victory will be theirs and his opponents will be humiliated.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): It is asserted that the Qur'ān is the Book of God; there is not the slightest doubt in this fact. Those who think that it has been falsely ascribed to God should be informed that it is the truth from God and its purpose is to warn those who as yet have not seen the likes of a warner. If they do not duly value it, their fate will be the

same as that of the earlier nations to whom God had sent warners.

Verses (4-9): It is stated that this world is not a place of amusement. The Almighty has made it in a very elaborate manner, and has not been left it unattended. He is directly controlling it. All directives emanate from Him and all consequences of these directives are reported back to Him. No one is His partner or intercessor. He has knowledge of all the Seen and the Unseen. He has created man with the best of qualities but very few benefit from these qualities and stay thankful to God.

Verses (10-14): The doubts raised by the rejecters of the Day of Judgement are responded to and the real reason of their rejection is referred to. Their fate on the Day of Judgement is depicted. It is stated that a confession of sins by people will be of no avail to them on that day. If faith was acceptable once a person observes the realities on which faith was to be professed, then the Almighty would have created every person on faith. What would then be the need to give him the faculties of intellect and of the awareness between good and evil?

Verses (15-22): Some traits of the people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān are referred to: those who are devoid of arrogance and value the truth will profess faith in it. These people bow their heads when they hear the verses of the Qur'ān, invoke God at various portions of the night and spend for His cause. No one can even imagine the comfort of the eyes which the Almighty has as yet concealed from them. The Almighty will not deal in the same manner with those obedient to Him and those who are disobedient to Him. These defiant will not only be punished in the Hereafter, they will also be punished in this world so that they are given an opportunity to take heed.

Verses (23-26): The Prophet (sws) is assured that before him the Almighty bestowed His Book on Moses (sws) as well. He punished those who rejected it. In a similar way, He will definitely take revenge from those who reject this Book, and just as from among the Israelites he bestowed leadership on those who persevered on the truth, in a similar manner He will bestow leadership on the companions of the Prophet (sws) if they strongly adhere to the truth. A brief reference is then made to the history of the Prophets of God and their nations to prove what is just stated, only if people have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Verses (27-30): The disbelievers are threatened that they regard the glad tidings of dominance given to the believers as very far-fetched and out of jest ask about the time of this triumph. They are told that whenever it does, professing faith in it will be of no avail to these people who are making fun of it today. The Prophet (sws) is directed to ignore such indiscreet elements: if these people are waiting for the Day of Judgement, then he should stop going after them and wait for it.

Section I: Verses (1-14)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ لَا رَیۡبَ فِیۡہِ مِنۡ رَّبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۲﴾ اَمۡ یَقُوۡلُوۡنَ افۡتَرٰىہُ ۚ بَلۡ ہُوَ الۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّکَ
لِتُنۡذِرَ قَوۡمًا مَّاۤ اَتٰىہُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّذِیۡرٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِکَ لَعَلَّہُمۡ یَہۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ اَللّٰہُ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ مَا
بَیۡنَہُمَا فِیۡ سِتَّۃِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰی عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ ؕ مَا لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِہٖ مِنۡ وَّلِیٍّ وَّ لَا شَفِیۡعٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَذَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾
یُدَبِّرُ الۡاَمۡرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَی الۡاَرۡضِ ثُمَّ یَعۡرُجُ اِلَیۡہِ فِیۡ یَوۡمٍ کَانَ مِقۡدَارُہٗۤ اَلۡفَ سَنَۃٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ ذٰلِکَ عٰلِمُ
الۡغَیۡبِ وَ الشَّہَادَۃِ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿۶﴾ الَّذِیۡۤ اَحۡسَنَ کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلَقَہٗ وَ بَدَاَ خَلۡقَ الۡاِنۡسَانِ مِنۡ طِیۡنٍ ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ
جَعَلَ نَسۡلَہٗ مِنۡ سُلٰلَۃٍ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ مَّہِیۡنٍ ﴿۸﴾ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىہُ وَ نَفَخَ فِیۡہِ مِنۡ رُّوۡحِہٖ وَ جَعَلَ لَکُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَ الۡاَبۡصَارَ وَ
الۡاَفۡـِٕدَۃَ ؕ قَلِیۡلًا مَّا تَشۡکُرُوۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ وَ قَالُوۡۤا ءَاِذَا ضَلَلۡنَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ءَاِنَّا لَفِیۡ خَلۡقٍ جَدِیۡدٍ ؕ بَلۡ ہُمۡ بِلِقَآیِٔ
رَبِّہِمۡ کٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ قُلۡ یَتَوَفّٰىکُمۡ مَّلَکُ الۡمَوۡتِ الَّذِیۡ وُکِّلَ بِکُمۡ ثُمَّ اِلٰی رَبِّکُمۡ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ لَوۡ تَرٰۤی اِذِ
الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ نَاکِسُوۡا رُءُوۡسِہِمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّہِمۡ ؕ رَبَّنَاۤ اَبۡصَرۡنَا وَ سَمِعۡنَا فَارۡجِعۡنَا نَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ لَوۡ
شِئۡنَا لَاٰتَیۡنَا کُلَّ نَفۡسٍ ہُدٰىہَا وَ لٰکِنۡ حَقَّ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنِّیۡ لَاَمۡلَـَٔنَّ جَہَنَّمَ مِنَ الۡجِنَّۃِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِیۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾
فَذُوۡقُوۡا بِمَا نَسِیۡتُمۡ لِقَآءَ یَوۡمِکُمۡ ہٰذَا ۚ اِنَّا نَسِیۡنٰکُمۡ وَ ذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ الۡخُلۡدِ بِمَا کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

This is Alif Lām Mīm. The revelation of this Book is undoubtedly from the Lord of the Universe. Do they say: "He has fabricated it himself and ascribed it to God?" In fact, it is the truth from your Lord so that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you that they may be rightly guided. (1-3)

It was God who created the heavens and the earth and all that lies

between them in six days, and then ascended the throne. You have no guardian or intercessor besides Him. Will you not take heed? (4)

He governs all affairs from the heavens to the earth. Then all these affairs return to Him in a day which is equivalent to a thousand years by your reckoning. He knows the unknown and the manifest. He is the Mighty One, the Ever Merciful. (5-6)

He who excelled in whatever He created. He began creating man with clay. Then carried forth his offspring from the essence of a trivial fluid. Then He perfected him and breathed His spirit into him and made for you ears, eyes and hearts – yet you are seldom grateful. (7-9)

And they say: "Once We are lost into the earth, shall we be created again?" In fact, these people deny meeting their Lord. Say: "The angel of death deputed to you claims your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned." And would that you were able to see these wrongdoers when they bowing their heads before their Lord would confess: "Lord! We have seen and we have heard; send us back so that we can do good deeds. Now we are convinced." Had it been Our will, We could have given every soul its guidance. But My word shall be fulfilled: "I will surely fill Hell with jinn and humans all." So, taste the flavour of this that you kept in oblivion the gathering of this day. We too have ignored you, and you will now taste eternal punishment for what you did. (10-14)

Explanation

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾[1]

Research on الٓمّٓ has already been presented in Sūrah Baqarah. It may be kept in mind that like the previous *sūrah*, the introductory verses of this *sūrah* as well resemble as those of Sūrah Baqarah.

It has been explained at another place that the word تَنْزِيْل does not mean merely to reveal but to reveal gradually in an elaborate way. The word الْكِتٰبِ refers to the Qur'ān. In other words, this Book has been gradually revealed in an elaborate way by the Almighty. The words لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ express that there is no doubt in the fact that it has been revealed by the Almighty. It is this very meaning of لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ that

1. This is Alif Lām Mīm. The revelation of this Book is undoubtedly from the Lord of the Universe.

I have stated in Sūrah Baqarah. This verse substantiates this meaning. The greatest difference of opinion which the Quraysh and the Jews had was with this claim of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) that this Book was being revealed from the Almighty. They would regard this claim as اِفْتِرَاء, as will be evident from the next verse. In other words, they would accuse the Prophet (sws) of concocting the Qur'ān and would assert that in order to force his ideas on them he is falsely ascribes it to the Almighty

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ۚ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ۝[2]

This question expresses amazement: Have these people become so blind and deaf in opposing the truth that they regard the claim of this book being from God as a false claim? The implication is that if these people had any trace of truth and justice in them they would never have stated this. Yet they have become blind and deaf in their frenzy of opposing the Prophet (sws).

Consider the next the words: بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ. The above cited accusation has been answered by the Qur'ān in various aspects, the details of which can be looked up in the previous *sūrahs*. Here, instead of giving a detailed answer, the claim has been stressed with a severe threat. This stress is evident here from two aspects. One, that it is the very truth which means that the ancestral religion to which these people adhere is totally baseless and false; the true religion is the one this book is inviting them to. Second, these people should not think that this book is being falsely ascribed to God; it is, in fact, from God. If these people keep denying it, they will bear its consequences.

The words لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ express the objective for which this book has been revealed in such an elaborate manner by God: the Prophet (sws) may warn these people – of their fate in this world and the situation they will have to face in the Hereafter – to whom no warner has yet come before him. Here the word قَوْمٌ refers to the Arabs to whom no prophet came after Ishmael

2. Do they say: "He has fabricated it himself and ascribed it to God?" In fact, it is the truth from your Lord so that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you that they may be rightly guided.

(sws). These words also express the great favour God has done to the unlettered Arabs by revealing this Book. They should duly value and honour this great favour.

These words at the same time also have a ring of warning in them: when the Almighty sends a warner to a nation, then the fate of that nation is judged. If even after that it does not mend its ways, then after giving a specific respite it is necessarily destroyed by the Almighty. I have explained this established practice of God at various places in this exegesis.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَ مَا بَیْنَهُمَا فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ ؕ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِیٍّ وَّ لَا شَفِیْعٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۝[3]

In the previous verse, it has been stated that the real purpose of this Book's revelation and that of Muḥammad's (sws) prophethood is warning people of the Hereafter. This verse provides details of this warning. There are two specific contents that constitute this warning: the beliefs of monotheism and hereafter. In the first place, the Qur'ān warns people of spending their lives while relying on false supports and hypothetical deities; the one and only God is the sole creator and administrator of this universe. Every person will ultimately return to Him and be held accountable before Him. For this reason, it is obligatory on everyone to thank and worship Him alone.

In the second place, the Qur'ān warns people of the Hereafter: it is certain to come. Finally, every person will come to God only. At that time, the wrongdoers will confess their crimes and request God to give them a chance to go back into the previous world so that they could lead their lives by accepting faith and by doing righteous deeds. However, there will be no opportunity for such requests and pleadings to be entertained there.

In the verse under discussion and in the next few ones, monotheism is discussed. After this, the Hereafter and what will befall there is discussed.

In the words اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَ مَا بَیْنَهُمَا فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ

3. It was God who created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them in six days, and then ascended the throne. You have no guardian or intercessor besides Him. Will you not take heed?

the days referred to are the days of God and it is clarified further down that a day of God equals one thousand human years. For this reason, six days actually refer to six phases. This, in fact, means that the creation of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them is not an accidental happening; in fact, God has created them in a very gradual and elaborate manner. This gradual and elaborate manner evidences the fact that this world has a purpose and wisdom behind it: it has not been made for entertainment.

The words ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ indicate that after making this world God did not detach Himself from its affairs. He is directly controlling and administering its affairs after ascending its throne. This is actually a refutation of the view of the Idolaters that after creating this world He consigned its management and control to some favoured ones and Himself became aloof to them. The false notion on which this view is based has already been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The words مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٍ point to the necessary consequence of what is stated above: when everything is directly controlled by Him, then every one will have to be gathered before Him one day. He will then decide between all affairs. At that time neither will a person be able to become a supporter nor a helper of another person. No one will be able to intercede for anyone against God. The word دُوْن means both "except" and "in opposition to." Here it is used in the latter sense and hence appropriate both for وَّلِيٍّ (gaurdian) and شَفِيْعٍ (intercessor)

Since all these consequences are based on established facts acknowledged by the addressees, they are warned as to why they do they not pay heed to such clear matters.

يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ فِيْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗٓ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ ۝ ذٰلِكَ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝[4]

The verse states that all affairs of this world from the heavens to the earth are under God's control. This is actually a refutation of a

4. He governs all affairs from the heavens to the earth. Then all these affairs return to Him in a day which is equivalent to a thousand years by your reckoning. He knows the unknown and the manifest. He is the Mighty One, the Ever Merciful.

false notion of the Idolaters that the earth is a far off area of this universe and that is why God has confined His governance to the heavens and has consigned the matters of the earth to some of His workers. It is about such people that at some places in the Qur'ān the question is raised: are there separate gods for the earth and the heavens; what a foolish inference they make?

The words ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ state that all affairs not only originate from God but also return to Him. The expression يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ here means "to refer." The implication is that after giving the directives He does not remain aloof; everything is presented back to Him and He is fully aware if His workers and the implementers of His will have discharged their duties or not and in what manner.

People have generally considered the words فِيْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗٓ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ to refer to the Day of Judgement and they think that it is a reference to the fact that that on this day the records of a person's deeds are to be presented before Him. They contend that the Day of Judgement would be very severe and it is to metaphorically express its severity that it would be of the span of a thousand years. In my view, this opinion is not correct. In Sūrah Ḥajj, precisely this subject is brought up in the following words:

إِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (٢٢: ٤٧)

And one day of your Lord is of the measure of your thousand years. (22:47)

This verse has come in response to the people's claim to hasten the punishment: when they are warned of the punishment they would say that they have been hearing this warning since a long time but it has not come. They would further say: if it has to come, why does it not come? In response to this, it is said that people must not judge God's words with their own standards and measures. Their days consist of twenty four hours and thus even a span of a few years seems very long to them; however, one of God's days is equivalent to their one thousand years, and His plans and projects are made while keeping this span in consideration. They become anxious while taking into account the measure of their days. It seems odd to them that a certain time period passes and the event that is claimed to happen does not

happen. They infer from this that the threat was a bluff. The fact is that as per the measure of God maybe even a second might not have elapsed.

It is in this context that the verse under discussion occurs. The implication is that all planning is in the hands of God. Directives originate from Him and then return to Him as well. However, this origin and return is with regard to the measure of God's days. For this reason, neither can every person be aware of their consequences nor can every person understand the wisdom behind them. The right attitude for people in this regard is that they should not show haste in the matters of God. In fact, they should show patience and wait for them to materialize.

The words ذٰلِكَ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ state that it is only the powerful and merciful God Who is aware of the known and the unknown. No one else has the status to know all the secrets of the universe. He is aware of all the known and the unknown and is also powerful and merciful. Hence people should trust Him and behave positively in this regard.

It is possible that a question arise in the mind of someone that in Sūraj al-Ma'ārij, this topic is discussed in the following words:

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَآئِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٧٠: ٤)

The angels and Gabriel Spirit ascend towards Him in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. (70:4)

There seems to be an apparent contradiction between the above cited verse and the one under discussion. However, in reality, there is no contradiction between the two. This difference is based on difference between the size of the orbits. For this reason, various planets and stars have days of different duration. What also needs our attention is that in the verse under discussion presenting of matters before God is under discussion while in Sūrah al-Ma'ārij, the direct appearance of the angels and Gabriel before God is mentioned. It is very much possible that matters are presented to God in a day whose measure is a thousand earth years and angels and Gabriel directly appear before God on day that is equivalent to fifty thousand earth years. These matters relate to the realm of the unknown (*ghayb*).

Nothing can be said about them with certainty. However, this much is evident that there is no contradiction between the two verses. Readers are advised to look up what I have written regarding this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥajj. God willing, I will explain some of its aspects in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij as well.

الَّذِیْٓ اَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ خَلَقَهٗ وَ بَدَاَ خَلْقَ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِیْنٍ ۚ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهٗ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ مَّهِیْنٍ ۚ﴿۸﴾ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىهُ وَنَفَخَ فِیْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِیْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۹﴾[5]

The attributes of God mentioned in the previous verse – as the one who is aware of the seen and the unseen and who is powerful and merciful – serve to form a prelude to sounding a warning about the Hereafter. This verse takes up this warning by stating that it is God Who has made everything in a grand manner. In other words, whatever He has created bears testimony to His power, wisdom, providence and profound knowledge. If a person reflects on the smallest of things created by God, he is astounded by the tremendous creativity of the Creator. He spontaneously cries out: فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِیْنَ (۲۳: ۱٤) (Blessed is God, the best of creators, (23:14)). It is from here that a person comes to realize that how can one think of a being who is so powerful, so wise, so discerning, so merciful and so gracious that He has created this huge universe without a purpose. Hence it is essential that a day come in which he distinguishes between truth and falsehood and then reward those who acknowledged their obligation to His favours and punish those who spent this life in a careless fashion. These latter type of people were the ones who neither deliberated on the wisdom of God nor gave importance to others who deliberated on it.

Consider next the part: وَبَدَاَ خَلْقَ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِیْنٍ. Earlier it was said that whatever God made, He made it in a sound manner. To substantiate this claim, instead of presenting evidence from the external word, man's creation is presented as evidence. People do not need to go far

5. He who excelled in whatever He created. He began creating man with clay. Then carried forth his offspring from the essence of a trivial fluid. Then He perfected him and breathed His spirit into him and made for you ears, eyes and hearts – yet you are seldom grateful.

away. They only need to reflect on their own phases of creation and see the grandeur of God's power, wisdom and providence in it. It is stated that this man who now shows so much conceit on his abilities was not created in the beginning by God from some expensive substance. In fact, he was created from clay. His structure was fashioned from clay and from this clay signs of life appeared in it. He should behold how his Creator's power and wisdom transformed this lump of clay into a majestic creation.

The words ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهٗ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ مَّهِيْنٍ point to the second phase of man's creation: in this phase his progeny came into being through the essence of a trivial and impure fluid instead of being created from clay.

Consider next the words: ثُمَّ سَوّٰىهُ وَ نَفَخَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ وَ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَ الْاَبْصَارَ وَ الْاَفْـِٕدَةَ. The word تسوية means to perfect something and give it its final touches, as has been explained at an appropriate place. It signifies the same thing as the one signified in the terminology of art by the term "finishing touch." The implication is that in this third phase, He gave finishing touches to this man made of clay and breathed His spirit into Him. After this, his faculties of sight, hearing and cognition appeared in him which make him distinct from other life forms.

In the words نَفَخَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ the word رُوْح implies the divine spirit. With this divine spirit, a person also has a divine spark in him and it is as a result of this divine spark that his sight, hearing and cognition became so radiant that he came to be called the best of creations (*ashraf al-makhlūqāt*). If he is deprived of this radiance, then his inner self will be engulfed in the same darkness as that of the beasts. Beasts also have eyes, ears and hearts; however, they are deprived of the divine spark. For this reason, their eyes, ears and hearts do not have the abilities which those of human beings have. It may also be kept in consideration here, that it falls under man's will and intention to sustain, increase or decrease this spark. Those who duly value it and fulfill its rights are able to increase it and it becomes stronger and stronger in them. Those who do not do so will find it diminishing in them until it is totally extinguished.

The ascription in مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ is meant to specify that the spirit is from God and in fact from among the blessings of God. It does not mean that it is something part of God. It was deemed necessary to state this

because this is one of the major reasons for the deviant philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* to come into being.

Also evident from this verse is that before his *taswiyah* (final touches) and *nafkh-i rūḥ* (breathing of spirit into him), a phase did pass on man when he was uncouth like animals and devoid of intellect and insight. After this phase, *taswiyah* perfected his external self and *nafkh-i rūḥ* his internal one.

The words قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ imply that man should reflect on all these stages of his creation – how the Almighty began creating him and how far He took him. It was only befitting that every part of his body express its gratitude to God's favours and providence, and that he should have spent all his abilities and gifts to please God. Yet, very few of these people are grateful to Him.

وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ءَاِنَّا لَفِيْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ۭ بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاۗئِ رَبِّهِمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ۝[6]

The implication of the verse is that the Almighty had blessed man with the faculties of sight, hearing and intellect for a certain reason: he should use them to witness the power, wisdom, mercy and providence of God and reach the conclusion that the Almighty has not created this world without a purpose; hence, it is essential that a day come when each person is held accountable for his deeds before the Almighty and be rewarded or punished. On the contrary, such is the misguided intellect of man that when he is warned of the Hereafter, then in spite of witnessing so many signs of God's power, he makes fun and sarcastically asks the question: after we shall decay into mud, will we be re-created?

The words بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاۗئِ رَبِّهِمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ imply that all these statements are lame excuses. How can they be so naïve as to doubt God in re-creating them when they have witnessed so many signs of His power within their own selves as well as around them? The fact is that these people are not willing to accept the fact they will one day be brought forth before God and be held accountable for their deeds. Accepting this weighs down heavily upon them. So in order to evade it they are fabricating all sorts of doubts and reservations. It may be kept in

6. And they say: "Once We are lost into the earth, shall we be created again?" In fact, these people deny meeting their Lord.

mind that at times, a person wants to negate something else but uses another thing as an excuse to negate it. The reason is that he does not find any room for directly negating. Similar was the case of the Idolaters of Arabia. They believed in God and hence could not explicitly deny that they will not be brought before God; however, they were also not willing to accept the heavy responsibilities imposed on them as a consequence of believing in Him. So, in order to evade them, in the first place they would try to raise such doubts regarding the Hereafter as the one just discussed and if they were ultimately led to accept the Hereafter, they would invent deities and intercessors who would save them from its consequences.

قُلْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِيْ وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ [7]

This verse is an answer to the two questions raised earlier: whoever dies, his soul is claimed by an angel who is deputed by God on every person. Hence, even after death every person remains in the sight of God and His deputed angels. Whenever God wants, He will raise each person to life and the person will be brought before God in the custody of His deputed angels.

The words ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ imply that no one should remain in the misconception that when he dies he will be brought forth to his alleged deities and intercessors. On that day, deities and intercessors will not even exist. Everyone will be brought before the one and only God and He will pass His judgement on them.

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ نَاكِسُوْا رُءُوْسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ رَبَّنَآ اَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ [8]

The words وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى can be addressed to the Prophet (sws) and also to the general masses. In the first case, the verse would sound assurance and in the second a warning. If the first case is chosen, the meaning would be that today these people are showing arrogance before the

7. Say: "The angel of death deputed to you claims your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned."

8. And would that you were able to see these wrongdoers when they bowing their heads before their Lord would confess: "Lord! We have seen and we have heard; send us back so that we can do good deeds. Now we are convinced."

Prophet (sws) and haughtily deny the Hereafter and being brought forth before God; however, if the Prophet (sws) would have been able to see when all the wrong-doers would be brought before God with their heads bent down, then __. The answer to this conditional clause is suppressed and there is much eloquence in this suppression. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) would have seen their helplessness at that time which he cannot even imagine today.

The words رَبَّنَآ اَبۡصَرۡنَا وَ سَمِعۡنَا فَارۡجِعۡنَا نَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوۡقِنُوۡنَ imply that at that time everyone of these wrongdoers will confess that they fully see and accept and that they may be allowed to return so that they can do pious deeds and that now they are fully convinced of everything.

وَلَوۡ شِئۡنَا لَاٰتَيۡنَا كُلَّ نَفۡسٍ هُدٰىهَا وَلٰكِنۡ حَقَّ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنِّىۡ لَاَمۡلَـئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الۡجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[9]

This verse is an answer to their confession and request which shall be given to them forthwith: after witnessing all this, their acknowledgement and faith are of no use. Had God been pleased of professing faith in such compelling circumstances, He would have given faith and guidance to everyone at their birth. This was not difficult at all for Him. However, He did not do this; in fact, regarding guidance He gave a choice to people. The purpose was that He wanted to test people as to which of them profess faith after using their intellect and insight and which of them choose the path of Satan while following their desires.

The words وَ لٰكِنۡ حَقَّ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنِّىۡ لَاَمۡلَـئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الۡجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ refer to the verdict of God which He declared before Satan in response to his challenge. This has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān. In Sūrah Ṣu'ad, the words are:

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَاُغۡوِيَنَّهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ اِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنۡهُمُ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ قَالَ فَالۡحَقُّ ۬ وَالۡحَقَّ اَقُوۡلُ ﴿۸۴﴾ لَاَمۡلَـئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنۡكَ وَمِمَّنۡ تَبِعَكَ مِنۡهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۸۵﴾

"I swear by Your glory and honour," said Satan, "that I will lead them all astray except your servants who you have selected." God replied: "This is the truth then and I speak nothing but the truth is

9. Had it been Our will, We could have given every soul its guidance. But My word shall be fulfilled: "I will surely fill Hell with jinn and humans all."

that I will surely fill Hell with you and all among human beings who are your followers." (38:82-85)

The reason for citing this statement would be to inform the wrongdoers that the time for apology has expired. The Almighty had already declared His verdict in response to Satan that he should lead astray whoever he can from among the progeny of Adam. The Almighty has granted man the free will to choose between God and Satan. This was his test in the life of the previous world. Now this stage has passed and time has come to face the consequences. Thus, today their fate has come before them and God's words about them have come true.

فَذُوْقُوْا بِمَا نَسِيْتُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّا نَسِيْنٰكُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[10]

As stated at another place in this exegesis, the word نسی also means "to ignore" and "to take no notice of something or someone." Here it is used in precisely this meaning. The implication is that no possibility of any question or request now remains. The way they have kept on ignoring this day, in a similar manner God has ignored them today. No request or pleading is now worthy of being accepted. They will now taste an eternal punishment because of their deeds. They should remember that this is no injustice that God has shown them. They have only reaped what they had sown all their life.

Section II: Verses (15-22)

The previous section of verses has outlined the reasons on account of which people were evading to profess faith in the Qur'ān. The succeeding verses depict what type of people are professing faith in it or will do so, and the status and reward they will get before God. Similarly, these verses also depict the fate in this world and in the next of those who are opposing it. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

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10. So, taste the flavour of this that you kept in oblivion the gathering of this day. We too have ignored you, and you will now taste eternal punishment for what you did.

اِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهَا خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّ سَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ هُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾
تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّ طَمَعًا ۫ وَّ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ
مَّاۤ اُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ قُرَّةِ اَعْيُنٍ ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا ؕ لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ
﴿١٨﴾ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى ۬ نُزُلًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ
فَسَقُوْا فَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ؕ كُلَّمَاۤ اَرَادُوْۤا اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَاۤ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِيْ
كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَ لَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَ مَنْ
اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ؕ اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Only those profess faith in Our revelations who, when reminded through them, fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord while praising Him and they are not arrogant. Their backs forsake their beds. They invoke their Lord in fear and hope and spend of what We have given them. So, no one knows the bliss of the eye that lies in store for them as a reward for their deeds. (15-17)

Can he, then, who is a believer be like a wrongdoer? Both cannot be equal. For those who have accepted faith and have done righteous deeds are orchards of pleasure in recompense for their deeds as their foremost feast. As for those who showed defiance, their abode is Hell. Whenever they try to escape from it, they shall be driven back into it, and shall be told: "Taste the torment of this Fire, which you continued to deny." (18-20)

And We will inflict on them the nearer torment besides the greater torment so that they may return to the right path. And who can be more unjust than those who pay no heed to the revelations of their Lord when they are reminded through them? We will surely take vengeance from such wrongdoers. (21-22)

Explanation

اِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهَا خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّ سَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ هُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[11]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws). The

11. Only those profess faith in Our revelations who, when reminded through them, fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord while praising Him and they are not arrogant.

implication is that he should not expect any good coming from people who in arrogance of their worldly superiority regard themselves to be greater than the truth; only those people will profess faith in the revelations of God who have humility and penitence in their hearts. Whenever they are reminded through them, instead of mutually quarrelling, they spontaneously fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord while exalting Him. In other words, those people will be influenced by these revelations whose hearts have not hardened. If there is any dust of negligence in such people, it is brushed away. They then adopt the truth in such a manner that they are able to access the farthest of frontiers in a very short time.

Consider next the words: سُجَّدًا وَّسَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ. I have already stated at some place the benefit of mentioning تسبیح (glorification) and تحمید (exaltation) side by side. The former encompasses absolving God of bad attributes and the latter encompasses affirming good attributes in Him. True comprehension of God comes while keeping in consideration both these aspects. If a person does not keep any of them in mind, such misconceptions about God may arise in his mind that the existence of God or otherwise become equal to him.

The words وَ هُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ state the bottom line: this ability has been engendered in these people because they are not arrogant. I have explained the essence of arrogance at another place. Its true meaning is to deny the truth. It is the source of all ailments. People who are afflicted with this fatal sickness are not willing to accept the most obvious of truths if they are against their desires and opinions. The consequence of this attitude is that God deprives them of the ability to accept the truth. Only those people are guided to accept the truth who regard the truth, whether big or small, to be above everything. Such are these people that when they encounter the truth from wherever it appears even if from the mouth of an enemy, they submit to it without any hesitation.

تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا ۫ وَّمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[12]

Such is the persistent fear of the Hereafter and its accountability that

12. Their backs forsake their beds. They invoke their Lord in fear and hope and spend of what We have given them.

these people keep getting up at night. They forsake their slumber and comfort and invoke God and offer the prayer to please Him. They fear God and at the same time pin all their hopes in Him. And they spend for the cause of God from what God has blessed them with.

Two things are mentioned in this verse: the prayer and charity. After faith, it is these two things which are its foremost manifestations and the whole edifice of religion stands on them. I have discussed this issue at many places in this exegesis.

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾[13]

The verse states the reward of the night vigilance and charity of these people: no one can imagine in this world the bliss (literally: coolness) of the eyes God has concealed for them in the Hereafter. Those who are today laughing at the sacrifices of people for a world these people have never seen will be dumb-struck to behold God's blessings on them. The believers will be overjoyed on seeing that their sacrifices yielded dividends way beyond their expectations

The words جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ imply that whatever they will be rewarded with will be in lieu of their deeds. The Almighty will reward their efforts spanning a few days with an eternal kingdom and will tell them that this is the reward of their deeds. Even though what a person will get will be because of God's grace, yet God has called it the consequence of their deeds because the joy a person receives on his own feats is incomparable.

أَفَمَن كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَن كَانَ فَاسِقًا ۚ لَّا يَسْتَوُۥنَ ﴿١٨﴾[14]

This verse corroborates what has been said earlier: there should not be any doubt in what has been said. This is what is going to happen and should happen. If it does not happen, then it would mean that the Creator of this world regards the believers and the defiant to be equal, and that He will not differentiate between His obedient people and those who were rebellious. Thinking thus would negate the fact

13. So, no one knows the bliss of the eye that lies in store for them as a reward for their deeds.

14. Can he, then, who is a believer be like a wrongdoer? Both cannot be equal.

that this world has been created for a wise purpose and that its Creator is just, merciful and wise. Hence this notion is totally baseless. The believers and the defiant cannot be equal to one another in the eyes of God. Thus it is essential that a day come in which those loyal to God be rewarded for their loyalty, and those disloyal to Him be punished for their disloyalty.

اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى ۭ نُزُلًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[15]

This verse states the details of the reward and punishment mentioned above: those who spend their lives while adhering to faith and doing righteous deeds will be rewarded with orchards of bliss. They will receive them as a reward of their deeds as the foremost gift they will be entertained with. The word نُزُل refers to the hospitality a guest receives as soon as he disembarks from his conveyance. Once guests pass through this initial welcome, they will be sent to Paradise. It is as if these orchards would be like the guest houses for the people of Paradise. Since they occur in the plural, it means that each dweller of Paradise will be granted separate orchards. It is evident from verse 15 of Sūrah Najm that جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى is near سِدْرَةُ الْمُنْتَهٰى (the farthest lote-tree). This lote-tree occurs at the meeting place of the realm of this world and that of the next. Hence if the جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى is found near it, then this is the most appropriate place for it. These are the events of the unknown world. Nothing can be stated about them with certainty. Whatever I have written has been written to explain the consequences of the word نُزُل. God willing, I will write more about جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى in the exegesis of Sūrah Najm.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فَسَقُوْا فَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ۭ كُلَّمَآ اَرَادُوْٓا اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَآ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَقِيْلَ لَهُمْ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[16]

After the reward of the believers has been mentioned, this verse states the punishment of the defiant and the wrongdoers. The verse

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15. For those who have accepted faith and have done righteous deeds are orchards of pleasure in recompense for their deeds as their foremost feast.

16. As for those who showed defiance, their abode is Hell. Whenever they try to escape from it, they shall be driven back into it, and shall be told: "Taste the torment of this Fire, which you continued to deny."

states that Hell will be their abode and they shall be shoved into it directly. It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān that the first hospitality they will receive is boiling water and the tree of Zaqqūm. They will try to escape from Hell; however, each time they try to do so, they will be pushed back into it and they shall be informed to not try to run away from this place; it is the very Hell and its punishment which they used to make fun of; now they should taste it.

وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾[17]

The expression الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى (nearer torment) refers to the torment of this world. Its purpose is to remind and warn people. The verse also mentions the الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ (the great torment) which the disbelievers will face in the Hereafter. However, before this great torment, the Almighty will also inflict these people with another torment. "These people" obviously refer to the Quraysh. Though what is being said here is in general terms yet their foremost addressees are the Quraysh. They are warned that they will be punished in this world also and the purpose would be to induce them to desist from their evil ways and return to righteousness. For the Quraysh, this الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى (nearer torment) began with the battle of Badr in which they were given the first jolt when their prominent leaders were killed. After that they were faced with similar bouts of humiliation one after the other until at the conquest of Makkah their power was totally quashed. The good people among them slowly accepted faith and the evil elements were gradually routed. Since their majority professed faith in Muḥammad (sws), no decisive punishment visited them the way it visited the previous nations. They were left to live after a warning as is evident from the words: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ (so that they may return).

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ؕ اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[18]

This verse states the reason of the warning of punishment sounded

17. And We will inflict on them the nearer torment besides the greater torment so that they may return to the right path.

18. And who can be more unjust than those who pay no heed to the revelations of their Lord when they are reminded through them? We will surely take vengeance from such wrongdoers.

by the previous verse: why should God not punish such people? Who can be greater wrongdoers and unjust than those who are reminded by God's revelations and they show aversion to them. The greatest means of reminding and counseling them could have been the Book of God and His Messenger. Those who do not awake from their slumber after this final warning will not awake from any other means, as per the established practice of God. There is no doubt that these wrongdoers do not deserve any lenience and God will necessarily take revenge from them. It has been explained at many instances in this exegesis how the Almighty deals with a nation to which He sends a messenger. The verse under discussion should be understood in the light of this practice of God.

Section III: Verses (23-30)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. In the previous section, the Quraysh have been threatened that if they do not believe in this guidance revealed by God, they will necessarily face God's torment in this world as well as the next. In this section, this premise is substantiated through history, and glad tidings have been given to the Prophet (sws) and his companions that they will be ultimately successful if they remain steadfast. Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا
مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا ؕ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ
فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُوْنِ يَمْشُوْنَ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ
ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ ؕ اَفَلَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَسُوْقُ الْمَآءَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا تَاْكُلُ مِنْهُ
اَنْعَامُهُمْ وَاَنْفُسُهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا
يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِيْمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَانْتَظِرْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And We had also given the Book to Moses that you should never be afflicted with any doubt regarding that promised day. And We made it a guidance for the Israelites. And when they showed perseverance, We appointed leaders from among them who would

guide people at Our behest. And they had conviction in Our revelations. Indeed, it is your Lord who will settle matters between them in which they have continued to differ. (23-25)

Did this not become a source of guidance for them that how many nations We have destroyed before whose settlements they would walk about? Surely in this there are many signs. So, do not these people listen and understand? (26)

Do they not heed how We drive water-laden clouds to dry land. Thus We bring forth crops with which their cattle eat and they themselves too. So, do they not see? (27)

And they ask: "When will this Day of Judgement be, if what you say be true? Say: "On the Day of Judgement, faith shall not be of benefit to those who would have disbelieved nor shall they be given respite after this. Therefore, ignore them and wait and they too are waiting." (30)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا ؕ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[19]

The word الْكِتٰب (the book) refers to the Torah. The opinion of those who regard it to refer it to the generic noun "Book" is against what is specified by the Qur'ān. The antecedent of the pronoun in جَعَلْنٰهُ is nothing but this Book and it is defined as one which God has made guidance for the Israelites. This definition itself determines that the word is not in its generic meaning; it refers to the Torah.

It is evident from the context that the antecedent of the pronoun in لِّقَآئِهٖ is not الْكِتٰب but the day of revenge and punishment with which the Quraysh have been threatened earlier in verses 21-23. The implication is that just as God gave Moses a Book and punished its rejecters in this world and will punish them in the Hereafter, in a similar manner those who reject the Book revealed through

19. And We had also given the Book to Moses that you should never be inflicted with any doubt regarding that promised day. And We made it a guide for the Israelites. And when they showed perseverance, We appointed leaders from among them who would guide people at Our behest. And they had conviction in Our revelations.

Muḥammad (sws) shall also be punished by God in this world as well as the Hereafter.

The words فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ imply that people should not be in any doubt about the day of revenge and punishment. It is certain to arrive. Though the words of this sentence apparently seem to address the Prophet (sws), yet the threat in them is directed towards the opponents and disbelievers. It is as if they have been indirectly addressed.

I have explained at several instances in this exegesis that the necessary consequence of sending a messenger to a nation and the revelation of a Book is that those who deny them are punished both in this world and the next

In Sūrah Furqān, it is stated concisely but comprehensively thus:

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهٗٓ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ وَزِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَآ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ﴿٣٦﴾ (٢٥: ٣٥-٣٦)

And We gave Moses the Book and made Aaron his brother his helper and directed them: "Both of you go to the people who have denied Our signs." Thus We totally routed them. (25:35-36)

In Sūrah Mu'minūn, the words are:

فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا فَكَانُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ (٢٣: ٤٨-٤٩)

Hence they rejected both [Moses and Aaron] and ended up among those destroyed. And We gave Moses the Book so that they become among the guided. (23:48-49)

As a general principle regarding all messengers, this practice is stated in the following words:

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَآءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا ۭ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ (٣٠: ٤٧)

And before you also We sent messengers to their nations. So they brought to them clear signs. Finally We took revenge from those who were wrongdoers and helping the believers is mandatory on Us. (31:47)

If the verse under discussion is reflected upon in the light of these parallel verses, every part of it will be fully explained. Since our exegetes do not interpret this verse in the light of its context and other parallel verses, they had to face a lot of difficult in understanding it.

The words وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ imply that those who rejected the Torah ended up with a fate that is destined for rejecters of divine books. However, because the Israelites accept it, God made it a scripture of guidance for them. The unfortunate rejected it and those who duly valued it received guidance from it. Readers are advised to look up the verses of Sūrah Mu'minūn (23:48-49) cited above.

The words وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا express the consequence of being given the Book: it was because of this Book that the Almighty made the Israelites the leaders of nations and sent such guides in them who would show the way to people at the behest of God.

It is evident from this that leadership is the essential consequence of receiving God's Book. As long as a nation – on which God confers His Book – adheres to it, it remains the leader of nations and its enemies are routed and humiliated before it.

The words يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا state the conditions and features of this world leadership: since the Israelites were conferred with the Book of God, they would guide people according to it. It was not that in spite of possessing divine guidance they would follow the ways of Satan.

The phrase لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا alludes to the pillar on which rests the foundation of the *sharī'ah*. The Israelites were only able to guide people according to God's *sharī'ah* as long as they themselves were able to strongly adhere to the *sharī'ah* and persevere on it by disregarding any fear or greed.

The words وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ refer to the foundation of their patience: they had full certitude in the revelations of God and they fully believed in reward and punishment. It was because of this that they passed their test of patience.

If we reflect on these verses, it will become clear that they contain glad tidings for the Muslims and also a reminder of some great future responsibilities. At the same time, they are also a critique on the Jews

of those times as to what responsibility they were bestowed with and what they actually made of it.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ [20]

This verse states that after this world ends, their matter will be presented in the court of God in the Hereafter and He will pass His final judgement about all things in which they differed. This obviously means that these people will actually suffer punishment because of what they had been doing.

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ ۖ أَفَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ [21]

After the fate of Moses' opponents is specially referred to earlier, this verse further refers to the fate of the previous nations in a concise manner. The fate of all these people who denied their respective messengers – and in whose ruins the Quraysh walk about – was not sufficient for their guidance. This is a reference to the ʻĀd, the Thamūd and the people of Lot etc whose accounts have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*. In their trade journeys, the Quraysh would frequent on the ruined settlements of these nations. It is evident from the style of the words that alas why do they not learn a lesson from the history of their country? Why do they want that they too be afflicted like the previous nations?

The words إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ imply that there are signs in these accounts of nations. If the Quraysh have any sense, they should benefit from these signs.

– The first sign in these accounts is that if people who are blessed with God's Book and are also reminded by Him through His messenger show aversion to it, they are regarded as wrongdoers and are punished by God.

– The second sign is that God punishes such wrongdoers in this

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20. Indeed, it is your Lord who will settle matters between them in which they have continued to differ.

21. Did this not become a source of guidance for them that how many generations We have destroyed before whose settlements they would walk about? Surely in this there are many signs. So, do not these people listen and understand?

world and after this also in the Hereafter.

– The third sign is that once the wrongdoers are punished, those who with full perseverance side by the truth are installed on the position of leadership by the Almighty.

The words اَفَلَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ allude to the fact that do these people not listen to the tales of these nations? The implication is that merely to remind and instruct these people has the Qur'ān mentioned the accounts of these nations with all the details encompassing the lessons they contain. If they have still shut their ears, then only sorrow can be expressed on their misfortune. The word "listen" means to understand and seek a lesson. This is because true listening is precisely this. In other words, the verb here implies the reality for which it stands.

اَوَ لَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَسُوْقُ الْمَآءَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا تَاْكُلُ مِنْهُ اَنْعَامُهُمْ وَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ العلقة 22

Since the word الْمَآءَ refers to water-laden clouds, use of the verb نَسُوْقُ is apt for it. The expression الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ means barren and dry land.

In the previous verses, attention is directed to the historical incidents and events which bear witness to God's law of reward and punishment in this world. Attention is now directed to the Hereafter: it should not be regarded as an improbable event; it is bound to happen and when it comes the Almighty will pass His final judgement. The verse asks people as to why they not observe the power and providence of God: He drives water-laden clouds to dry lands and then through it brings out various types of crops which are of benefit to people as well as to their animals.

The words اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ rebuke these people on showing lack of sight. The earlier verse has already rebuked them on not listening. In other words, what is being said is that just as their ears have become deaf, their eyes too have lost their vision. Every now and then, they behold the earth dead and then given life again but still are afflicted with the doubt that God is not powerful enough to re-create them.

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22. Do they not heed how We drive water-laden clouds. Thus We bring forth crops with which their cattle eat and they themselves too. So, do they not see?

Deliberation on the verse under discussion shows that the Almighty has specially highlighted His power and providence. Both these attributes present a very clear evidence on the need and possibility of the Hereafter. This has been explained in the exegesis of previous *sūrahs*.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[23]

The verse implies that such is the lack of insight and foolishness of these people that when their attention is directed to prominent historical signs and those found in the world around them, they mockingly ask: if such a day is really to come and the Prophet (sws) and his companions are truthful in their claim, why does it not arrive? The implication is that they are not prepared to accept anything on the basis of reasoning; they will only believe when they see it with their eyes.

قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِيْمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[24]

This verse states the answer to their demand: if they want to believe in the Day of Judgment after seeing it, the Prophet (sws) should tell them that such a belief will be of no avail to them. Once it comes, no one will be given any respite even to reform and repent in order to atone for his blemishes. The expression يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ refers to the day on which the verdict shall be delivered. God's Messengers have informed their nations of two punishments: the punishment of the Hereafter and the punishment of the Herein. The latter comes in the form of a decisive divine torment as a consequence of a nation denying its respective messenger. The practice of God delineated by this verse relates to both these situations: just as professing faith after the advent of the Day of Judgement is of no avail, similarly after the advent of the decisive divine torment professing belief is of no avail. The reason for this is that only that faith is acceptable to God which

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23. And they ask: "When will this Day of Judgement be, if what you say be true?

24. Say: "On the Day of Judgement, their faith shall not be of benefit to those who would have disbelieved nor shall they be given respite after this."

is professed in the guidance of intellect while exercising freedom. Professing faith under compulsion has no weight before Him. Had such faith been of any benefit before Him, everyone would have been created by Him on faith – as is stated at another instance. This would not have been the slightest difficult for Him. But He never did this.

فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡهُمۡ وَانۡتَظِرۡ اِنَّهُمۡ مُّنۡتَظِرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾[25]

Here at the end, the Prophet (sws) is directed that if these people are adamant on observing the Day of Judgement, there is no use discussing things any further with them. He should leave them to themselves. He also should wait for this day the way they are waiting. The day will arrive at its time appointed by God.

On these lines, the exegesis of this *sūrah* comes to an end. فللہ الحمد و المنۃ (gratitude to God and it is His favour).

9 am, Saturday
17th August 1974
Raḥmānābād

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25. Therefore, ignore them and wait and they too are waiting."

Sūrah al-Aḥzāb

Central Theme of the Sūrah, Relationship with the Group and Period of Revelation

Just as Sūrah al-Nūr is the last *sūrah* of its group, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb too is the last *sūrah* of the whole group which began from Sūrah al-Furqān. As explained before, this group validates prophethood and the Qur'ān. In consideration of this, there are some very prominent aspects of this *sūrah* that are worth noting:

i. The Prophet (sws) is directed to fulfill the responsibility of Messengerhood imposed on him by God without caring for the reproaches of people.

ii. The distinctive status he occupies among prophets and messengers of God is stated.

iii. The nature of his relationship with the Muslim *ummah* and his rights and their implications on them are explained.

iv. The status of his wives among Muslims and his special relationship with them is elucidated.

v. A reference to a great responsibility entrusted to man by the Almighty and which is explained by Him in His book. A reminder is sounded of the rights and obligations this great responsibility entails.

This *sūrah* was revealed in the period when men and women among the Hypocrites had launched a malicious propaganda against the Prophet (sws) on the false pretext of some reformatory measures suggested by the Qur'ān. They even tried to poison the minds of his wives. Also alluded to in this *sūrah* is the mischief and pranks they spread during the battle of Aḥzāb (5 AH) to cause frustration and aversion among Muslims. In this regard, the true picture of what happened between Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) and Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) is also depicted because this incident too like the incident of *ifk* already mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr was used by the Hypocrites to spread negative propaganda.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): It is emphasized on the Prophet (sws) that whatever is revealed to him from God should be communicated by him to others without caring for any reproaches of people. He should completely ignore the oppositions campaign launched by the Hypocrites. God is the helper and the protector. He should trust Him.

Verses (4-6): Measures are stated to reform the customs of *ẓihār* and adopted children found in the Arab *jāhiliyyah*. Both have no relation with the norms of sense and reason. However much the opponents may raise a clamour against these measures should not be a cause of any bother or concern. These customs are self-fabrications of these people. God wants to cleanse the contradictions found in our social life and bring it in line with the right course of human nature. Muslims are directed to attribute adopted children to their actual fathers. If their fathers are not known, they should have the status of their allies and brethren and must not be regarded as their own children. Whatever has happened till then under the influence of *jāhiliyyah* has been forgiven by God. However, after this explanation no option remains to cling to these customs. The greatest status and right in an Islamic society is that of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). His wives are mothers of the believers. The status of nearness of other blood relatives is in accordance with the law the Almighty has stated in His Book.

Verses (7-8): The Almighty has bound each prophet with the firm promise that he should only invite people to the religion of God in all circumstances. In this matter, neither should they show deference to anyone nor care about the opposition of anyone so that this attitude of his can become a yardstick between the pure and impure, the sincere and the Hypocrite and each person is rewarded or punished according to his deeds.

Verses (9-27): Concise comments are made on the events of the Battle of the Ditch. The purpose is to deeply engender trust and confidence in God to which the very first verse of the *sūrah* urges. In spite of the fact that the disbelievers had attacked Madīnah with all their allies and the Hypocrites too went all out to defeat the Muslims through their conspiracies and connivances, the Almighty helped Muslims through His divine forces and their enemies were routed.

The message is that if like this Muslims continue to adhere to the religion of God and remain sincere companions of His Messenger in spite of all this opposition, God will help them at every front.

Verses (28-35): After urging the Muslims to obey the Prophet (sws) as a unit, the pure wives of the Prophet (sws) are addressed and explained the responsibilities their status entails: because of the relationship with Muḥammad (sws) they will hold a high position if they fulfill their responsibilities and their punishment is also very stern if they are guilty of any defiance. Their real obligation is obedience and loyalty to the Prophet (sws) and spreading the radiance of Qur'ānic guidance being taught to them by him. Hence it only is befitting for them to stay put in their homes with full grace. They should also try to protect themselves from the influence of the men and women among the Hypocrites who taking advantage of their benevolence want to lure them to become their beloveds. God wants that the wives of the Prophet (sws) remain cleansed of all types of filth and devote themselves for the education and dissemination of the Qur'ānic teachings of law and wisdom.

Verses (36-40): A brief comment is made on the marriage between Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) and Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta). What is said foremost in this regard is that no believing man or woman has the right to say anything in a matter decided by God and His Messenger. They have the greatest right on the believers. After this, Zayd's incident is referred to. The Prophet (sws) wanted to elevate his status but Zayd (rta) could not pull along the marriage, and divorced his wife in spite of the Prophet's insistence not to do so. After this marriage was proposed by the Prophet (sws), men and women among the Hypocrites started taunting Zaynab (rta) by saying that the Prophet (sws) had committed a great oppression by proposing a lady of noble origin for a freed slave. Even after these taunts, Zaynab (rta) continued to pull along with Zayd (rta) with patience and gratitude. Yet Zayd (rta) because of his personal opinion divorced her. Details are forthcoming. This naturally became a great source of grief for Zaynab (rta). The only way the Prophet (sws) could think of healing her wound was to marry her but he feared that this would create great commotion and propaganda. Zayd (rta) was known as the adopted child of the Prophet (sws) and in the Arab *jāhiliyyah* adopted sons were accorded the same status as real sons. The Prophet's adversaries

would make his marriage with Zaynab a means to spread propaganda and mischief that in the first place he married off a lady of noble origin to a freed slave who was his adopted son and later himself married this wife of his adopted son. Moreover, it had already been revealed in the Qur'ān that polygamy should be restricted to four wives. So the Prophet (sws) was hesitant in marrying anyone. However, the Almighty directed him to marry Zaynab (rta) by disregarding all these fears so this marriage could eradicate an evil custom of the age of *jāhiliyyah*.

Verses (41-48): Muslims are directed to engage themselves as much as possible in remembering the Almighty. The advent of the Prophet (sws) is a manifestation of the great mercy of God to them in order to lead them from the darkness of polytheism and disbelief to the radiance of faith and religion. If they give due regard to this radiance, they will succeed both in this world and in that to come. The Prophet (sws) is then addressed and told that he is a witness of God's religion before His creation. He should give glad tidings of Paradise to those who accept this testimony, and inform those who reject it that Hell shall be their abode. He is a divine caller from God and a lamp of guidance to lead people out from the darkness of polytheism and disbelief. He should continue to fervently discharge this obligation, and should not care about the adversity of the Hypocrites and disregard the harm they cause.

Verses (49-52): It is declared that all of the Prophet's wives are legally allowed to him. The restriction of four is not meant for him the way it is for others. Yet there are certain other restrictions on him in this regard which are not for the rest. Reference is made to the reason that the Prophet (sws) is given this specific latitude. The wives of the Prophet (sws) are told to follow this verdict of God. The Hypocrites are warned that by spreading mischief and disinformation about the wives of the Prophet (sws) they should not be a source of bother for the Prophet (sws).

Verses (43-62): People are stopped from entering the house of the Prophet (sws) without asking permission. His wives and those of the Muslims are directed to cover themselves when they go out of their homes. This will not provide any opportunity to the Hypocrites to tease and harass them. In this regard, the Hypocrites are sounded a final warning that if they do not desist from their ill-ways and pranks,

very soon final directives will be revealed to rout them. After that, they will not find refuge anywhere.

Verses (63-73): This is the concluding section of the *sūrah*. First, people are reminded of the Day of Judgement that they should not regard it to be far off. It is looming on their heads. On that day, no one will be of any benefit to another. Leaders and their followers who had gone astray will mutually curse one another.

The Hypocrites are warned to give up blindly following the Jews who had harassed Moses (sws) at every step. Finally, God gave death to Moses (sws) with dignity and respect and cursed those had harassed him. They should keep fearing God and adopt the attitude of "we listened and we obeyed." God will set right their deeds and forgive their sins. This path is the path of great success.

At the end, a reminder is sounded of the great trust and covenant which only human beings were considered worthy of among all creation of God. On this trust and covenant rests all the dignity of human beings. If they fulfill the obligation they owe to it, they will rise to the highest status and if they fail in this, then no one will be more unfortunate than they.

Section I Verses (1-8)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّهَا النَّبِیُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَ لَا تُطِعِ الۡكٰفِرِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِیۡمًا حَكِیۡمًا ۙ﴿۱﴾ وَّ اتَّبِعۡ مَا یُوۡحٰۤی
اِلَیۡكَ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِیۡرًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّ تَوَكَّلۡ عَلَی اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰی بِاللّٰهِ وَكِیۡلًا ﴿۳﴾ مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ
لِرَجُلٍ مِّنۡ قَلۡبَیۡنِ فِیۡ جَوۡفِهٖ ۚ وَ مَا جَعَلَ اَزۡوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔیۡ تُظٰهِرُوۡنَ مِنۡهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمۡ ۚ وَ مَا جَعَلَ اَدۡعِیَآءَكُمۡ
اَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكُمۡ قَوۡلُكُمۡ بِاَفۡوَاهِكُمۡ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ یَقُوۡلُ الۡحَقَّ وَ هُوَ یَهۡدِی السَّبِیۡلَ ﴿۴﴾ اُدۡعُوۡهُمۡ لِاٰبَآئِهِمۡ هُوَ اَقۡسَطُ
عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اٰبَآءَهُمۡ فَاِخۡوَانُكُمۡ فِی الدِّیۡنِ وَ مَوَالِیۡكُمۡ ؕ وَ لَیۡسَ عَلَیۡكُمۡ جُنَاحٌ فِیۡمَاۤ اَخۡطَاۡتُمۡ بِهٖ
وَ لٰكِنۡ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتۡ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِیۡمًا ﴿۵﴾ اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوۡلٰی بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَ اَزۡوَاجُهٗۤ
اُمَّهٰتُهُمۡ ؕ وَ اُولُوا الۡاَرۡحَامِ بَعۡضُهُمۡ اَوۡلٰی بِبَعۡضٍ فِیۡ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُهٰجِرِیۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَفۡعَلُوۡۤا اِلٰۤی
اَوۡلِیٰٓـئِكُمۡ مَّعۡرُوۡفًا ؕ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِی الۡكِتٰبِ مَسۡطُوۡرًا ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِذۡ اَخَذۡنَا مِنَ النَّبِیّٖنَ مِیۡثَاقَهُمۡ وَ مِنۡكَ وَ مِنۡ نُّوۡحٍ وَّ
اِبۡرٰهِیۡمَ وَ مُوۡسٰی وَ عِیۡسَی ابۡنِ مَرۡیَمَ ۪ وَ اَخَذۡنَا مِنۡهُمۡ مِّیۡثَاقًا غَلِیۡظًا ۙ﴿۷﴾ لِّیَسۡـَٔلَ الصّٰدِقِیۡنَ عَنۡ صِدۡقِهِمۡ ۚ
وَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡكٰفِرِیۡنَ عَذَابًا اَلِیۡمًا ﴿۸﴾

O Prophet! Have fear of God and disregard the disbelievers and the Hypocrites. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, Wise. And follow what is being revealed from your Lord. Indeed, God is aware of all that you do. And trust God. And sufficient a trust is God. (1-3)

God has not put two hearts within any person's chest nor has made the wives whom you do *ẓiḥār* with as your mothers, nor made your adopted sons as your own sons. All these are mere words which your mouths utter and God declares the truth and guides to the right path. Call your adopted sons after their fathers. This is more just in the sight of God. And if you are not aware of their fathers, regard them as your brothers in Faith and as allies to your tribe. The mistake you have made in this regard shall be forgiven, but you will be held accountable for what your hearts have firmly intended. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (4-5)

The right of the Prophet is greater on the believers than they have on one another and the wives of the Prophet are their mothers, and that blood relations are closer to one another than to other believers and the *muhājirūn* in the law of God, yet you are permitted to treat

your friends and relatives kindly. This is decreed in the Book. (6)

And remember when We took a covenant from the prophets and also from you and from Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus son of Mary as well. A solemn covenant We took from them so that God might question the truthful about their truthfulness [and the disbelievers and Hypocrites about their disbelief and hypocrisy] and for the disbelievers, He has prepared a woeful punishment. (7-8)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۝[1]

The Prophet (sws) is addressed here with the title النَّبِيُّ not merely out of respect as has been generally understood. He has actually been addressed in this way to remind him of his status and position. In other words, since he is God's prophet and messenger, he should only care about God. He should only fear God and disregard the opposition of the disbelievers and the Hypocrites. An example of such an address can be seen in Sūrah al-Mā'idah: (٥: ٦٧) يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (O Prophet! Fully communicate to them what the Almighty has revealed to you, (5:67)).

The Prophet (sws) has not been reprimanded here by asking him to disregard the disbelievers and the Hypocrites for there was a chance that he may succumb to their awe and dread; on the contrary, the direction of the reprimand is towards his opponents though he is apparently addressed. He should not yield to any of the mischief worked and pressure exerted by them. It may be kept in mind that the succeeding verses will mention certain events and incidents which the disbelievers and the hypocrites had used to work mischief.

Here, the reason that the disbelievers and the Hypocrites are mentioned together is that both primarily belong to the same evil stock. Both are united in their stand against Islam. The only difference is that one group expresses open enmity against Islam and the other enters into the folds of Islam by becoming part of it and then tries to sever its roots. Hence, there is no difference between the two as far as the end result is concerned. On the contrary, it is evident

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1. O Prophet! Have fear of God and disregard the disbelievers and the Hypocrites. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, Wise.

from the Qur'ān that the Hypocrites will be in the deepest level of Hell.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا state why a messenger of God should disregard everyone and fear no one except his Lord: God is All-Knowing and Wise. Hence if He has directed us to do something it must be based on true knowledge and wisdom. Whatever nonsensical talk its opponents are indulging in is not worthy of being taken notice of. Verse 39 and verse 48 will further explain this.

وَّاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۳﴾[2]

What is said earlier in a negative way is repeated here in a positive one: while paying no heed to the pranks worked by the mischief mongers, the Prophet (sws) should follow the divine revelations sent to him from his Lord and rest assured that all his deeds and measures are in His notice. It may be noted that the first address in this verse is in the singular (اتَّبِعْ) and later changed to plural (تَعْمَلُوْنَ). This signifies the fact that the Prophet (sws) is addressed here as the representative of his people. It is evident from this style that Muslims too must give this regard to the Prophet (sws) in matters of religion.

The words وَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا imply that when every work of God is based on knowledge and wisdom and He is also aware of everything, then the Prophet (sws) should trust Him and adhere to his stance. God is sufficient enough to be trusted alone. The Prophet (sws) does not need any support in His presence. The word وَكِيْلٌ has already been explained at another place in this exegesis. It refers to someone who can be fully trusted and to whom all matters can be consigned as a result. God requires of His servants to follow His directives come what may and trust Him that whatever difficulties they may face in His cause, they will not be left alone by Him; they will be granted help and support by Him to deal with these difficulties.

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهٖ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔيْ تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ

2. And follow what is being revealed from your Lord. Indeed, God is aware of all that you do. And trust God. And sufficient a trust is God.

اَدْعِيَآءَكُمْ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِى السَّبِيْلَ ۝[3]

After the earlier introductory verses, coming up are certain issues in which certain reforms were suggested by the Qur'ān and the disbelievers and the Hypocrites launched a malicious campaign against these the Prophet (sws) with reference to these reforms.

The words مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِىْ جَوْفِهٖ serve as a prelude to what is mentioned later. Since what is mentioned later reflects a contradiction of thought and intention hence what contradiction of intention stands for is discussed first. Had the Almighty wanted that a person remain entangled in the conflict of contradictory and clashing intentions, He would have blessed him with more than one heart; yet He did not even give him two hearts. The obvious meaning of this is that He did not like that a person become a target of contradictory thoughts and intentions. However, it is a strange aspect of man's intellect that contrary to the way God has created him he becomes an amalgam of contradictory thoughts and intentions. Thus, on the one hand, he claims to believe in God and, on the other hand, ascribes partners to Him. Similarly, on the one hand, he pledges to obey God's messenger, while, on the other hand, connives with his enemies and conspires against his teachings. The fact is that if he has one heart, then his thoughts and intentions too must not be contradictory. They should in fact be in complete harmony and accord. If the situation is to the contrary, then this only shows that a person's heart is contaminated and sick and it is the duty of every sane person to redress this state of affairs and create harmony between his thoughts.

An example of this contradiction of thought is mentioned by the words وَ مَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔىْ تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ which state that if a person expresses *ẓihār* with his wife, then this does not make his wife his mother yet in the days of *jāhiliyyah* people regarded such women to be prohibited to them the way mothers are. When the Qur'ān made its intent clear to reform this custom, the Hypocrites and disbelievers started the malicious propaganda against the Prophet (sws) that

3. God has not put two hearts within any person's chest nor has made the wives whom you do *ẓiḥār* with as your mothers, nor made your adopted sons as your own sons. All these are mere words which your mouths utter and God declares the truth and guides to the right path.

women who were prohibited to people for marriage had been made allowed by him and his followers.

Ẓihār is a term of the Arab *jāhiliyyah*. If a person uttered the words اَنْتَ عَلَيَّ كَظَهْرِ اُمِّي (you are now prohibited to me the way my mother's back is), his wife would become eternally prohibited to him. It is from the word ظَهْر (back) that the term *ẓihār* (ظِهَارٌ) has originated. However, its application is not confined to using precisely this word. If a person regards any other limb of a wife to be prohibited to him and through it insinuates the connotation of prohibition, then this will also be considered as *ẓihār*. In the Arab *jāhiliyyah*, this would connote an irrevocable divorce. The Qur'ān (58:2-4) regarded it to be an evil and a lie and permitted a believer who had uttered it to revoke it and become intimate with the wife once again. However, to atone for such a heinous utterance does not make a wife a person's mother; however, since he has uttered a false and evil thing, he should liberate a slave. If a slave is not available, he should fast for two consecutive months and if this is also not possible for him, then he should feed sixty poor people. Through this reformatory measure the Qur'ān has guided people to save their family lives from disruption who in frenzy and anger utter nonsensical words without realizing their consequences. At the same time, this guidance was meant to warn them and others to follow it in future as well. However, the disbelievers and the Hypocrites who were always on the look out to create the slightest ground for opposing the Prophet (sws) started spreading the vicious propaganda that this person is not differentiating between mother and wife. It is this very propaganda that this verse has referred to: these people are inflicted with the malady of contradictory thoughts and conflicting ideas, otherwise they should think that how can such ignorance and nonsensical utterance equate a mother with a wife. He definitely deserves to be punished and reformed on this blemish so that he and other people learn a lesson but he does not deserve that his family life should be ruined. Here, I will content myself to these brief comments because the Qur'ān too has shown brevity here. God willing, in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Mujādalah, I will dwell in detail on this issue and explain the evils of this methodology of divorce as against the divorce methodology suggested by the Qur'ān, which has actually addressed these evils.

A similar contradiction of thought inflicts people regarding adopted sons. In the age of *jāhiliyyah*, they occupied the same status as real sons. It was not possible for any person to marry the wife of his adopted son after his death or after her divorce. This custom was totally against the natural familial system founded by Islam on the principal of وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ (٦:٣٣) (blood relations are closer to one another than to others (33:6)). Hence, when the time arrived for the reformation of this custom, the Almighty Himself directed the Prophet (sws) to marry Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) the divorcee of Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta), his adopted son. The most effective way this custom could have been eradicated was that the Prophet (sws) himself take this measure. However, the disbelievers and the Hypocrites made this a means of spreading malicious propaganda against him by saying that he has married the wife of his adopted son. While referring to this propaganda, the Qur'ān has stated equating real sons to adopted sons as another manifestation of their contradictory thoughts. They accord equal status to both. Detailed discussion is coming up on this issue later in the *sūrah*. Hence, I will content myself to this brief comment.

The words ذٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ الْحَقَّ وَ هُوَ يَهْدِى السَّبِيْلَ imply that such nonsensical utterances are concocted by their tongues. They have no relation to sense and reason and divine directives. Hence they are baseless. Through His messengers and books, God is guiding them towards the truth and towards the straight path of human nature. So they should adopt this straight path and give up the customs and innovations of the era of *jāhiliyyah*.

اُدْعُوْهُمْ لِاٰبَآئِهِمْ هُوَ اَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَ مَوَالِيْكُمْ ۚ وَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيْمَآ اَخْطَاْتُمْ بِهٖ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ ۚ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۝[4]

The verse states that adopted sons should be called after the names of

4. Call your adopted sons after their fathers. This is more just in the sight of God. And if you are not aware of their fathers, regard them as your brothers in Faith and as allies to your tribe. The mistake you have made in this regard shall be forgiven, but you will be held accountable for what your hearts have firmly intended. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

their fathers so that their real lineage is known. This is more akin to truth and justice in the law of God. If they disobey this directive by equating adopted sons to real sons, then the whole system of inheritance, mutual relationships and socials connection will be disrupted. This system is based on blood relations and on the feelings of affiliation found in human nature. God has founded all the directives of Islam, whichever sphere they may belong to, on justice and fairness. Hence, nothing in them should be against justice and fairness.

The words فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اٰبَآءَهُمۡ فَاِخۡوَانُكُمۡ فِى الدِّيۡنِ وَمَوَالِيۡكُمۡ state that if the fathers of these adopted sons are not known, then they should be regarded as brothers in religion and *mawālī*. It was Islam which first introduced the Arabs to the concept of religious brotherhood. Yet they did have in them a way to associate a person with tribes and families. It was called *ḥilf* or *wilā*. If an outsider wanted to be included in a family or a tribe, he could be accommodated and would then be called *mawlā* (singular of *mawālī*) of the tribe. He would then have the same rights and obligations as real members of that tribe. If he was killed, the family or tribe to which he was a *mawlā* would have the right to demand *qiṣāṣ*. Similarly, if he undertook something that imposed some responsibility on him, then the family and tribe would share this responsibility. مولی القوم منهم (The *mawlā* of a nation will be regarded its part) was an established principle among the Arabs. It is evident from this verse that Islam also kept this principle intact. The *wilā* of a liberated slave of a family would also belong to that family. For example, if the liberated slave died and he had no heir then because of *wilā* his inheritance would be given to the liberator. This verse also alludes to the fact that if the father of an adopted son is not known, then he will be regarded as a brother in religion. However, he will not be regarded as the real son.

The words وَلَيۡسَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ جُنَاحٌ فِيۡمَاۤ اَخۡطَاۡتُمۡ بِهٖ وَلٰكِنۡ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتۡ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا imply that the mistake that has been committed till then in this regard out of ignorance would not entail accountability. Yet, if insistence on this wrong custom is persisted with then this will turn it into a crime. This is because now it will be willful and God holds such willful mistakes as accountable.

اَلنَّبِىُّ اَوۡلٰى بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجُهٗۤ اُمَّهٰتُهُمۡ وَاُولُوا الۡاَرۡحَامِ بَعۡضُهُمۡ اَوۡلٰى بِبَعۡضٍ فِىۡ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓئِكُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا ۭ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا ۝[5]

This verse explains the degree of status relatives and certain personalities hold. The purpose is to save Muslims from blemishes – some examples of which have been stated earlier in the *sūrah*.

The word اَوْلٰى means "having more right" as in: اِنَّ اَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَلَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ (٣: ٦٨) (those who followed Abraham are more entitled to ascribe themselves to him, (3:68)). In other words, the right the Prophet (sws) has on a Muslim is the greatest in relation to what he has for others. So much so, this right is even greater than his own life. This aspect is discussed later in the *sūrah* in the following words:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا (٣٣:٣٦)

It is not possible for a believing man or woman that if God and His Messenger have decided a matter to have a say in it. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed far in error. (33:36)

It is evident from this that in matters in which God and His Messenger have given a ruling, it must be obeyed by all believers without any hesitation. A messenger is an envoy of God and speaks in this very capacity. Hence, a necessary requirement of faith in this regard is that believing men and women should obey him without any hesitation just as they obey God. They should neither care about the opposition or hindrance offered by others nor their own interests or their own life and wealth.

The words وَاَزْوَاجُهٗٓ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ express the special natural consequence of this relationship which a believer has or should have with God's messenger. If there is no trace of hypocrisy in this relationship, then every Muslim will naturally have the same feelings for the wives of the Prophet (sws) as decent sons have for their mothers. Such is the

5. The right of the Prophet is greater on the believers than they have on one another and the wives of the Prophet are their mothers, and that blood relations are closer to one another than to other believers and the *muhājirūn* in the law of God, yet you are permitted to treat your friends and relatives kindly. This is decreed in the Book.

respect and awe they command because of a believer's relation with the Prophet (sws) that no one can even think of marrying them. If anyone, it is the Hypocrites who can think to the contrary. They would even spread mischief and indulge in conspiracies to fulfill their objectives, as shall be explained ahead. This verse actually put an end to this mischief mongering and later on this basis of prohibition of marriage with them was expressed in explicit words: وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا (۳۳: ۵۳) (And it is not lawful to you that you torment God's Messenger nor is it lawful to you that you ever wed his wives after him, (33:53)). Readers may confine themselves to this brief allusion. Later, I shall dwell upon the religious benefits that are concealed in this prohibition.

After mentioning the distinctive status of the Prophet (sws) and his wives and the aspect which grants them this status, the words وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ point to the principle already mentioned in Sūrah al-Nisā' which forms the basis regarding all other relationships. According to this principle, blood relations will have rights on one another on the basis of closeness. The words فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ refer to verses 7-13 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in which the law of inheritance is mentioned in accordance with this principle.

The words مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ state that in contrast to other believers and the *muhājirūn*, blood relatives are more close to a believer. This verse also abrogated the system of sharing rights between the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* that was set up earlier on the basis of Islamic brotherhood.

The words اِلَّآ اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓئِكُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا ؕ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا refer to the fact that after this what could be done was that those relatives of a person who were not his heirs could be dealt with in a kindly manner within the limits stipulated by the *sharī'ah*. These limits have already been stipulated in Sūrah al-Nisā'. The words كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا point to this.

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوْحٍ وَّاِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۠ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ۙ﴿۷﴾[6]

6. And remember when We took a covenant from the prophets and also from you and from Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus son of Mary as well. A solemn covenant We took from them.

In verses 1-2, the Prophet (sws) was directed to follow what is being revealed to him while disregarding every fear and at the end of this section the directive of inviting people to this revelation is further strengthened through the history of the prophets of God. The implication is that whatever the Prophet (sws) is being directed to do from God is the same as what other prophets were directed to do. God took the promise from all the prophets to follow what is being revealed to them and to deliver it to the people exactly in the way it was given to them. The verse says that this covenant was taken by God from Muḥammad (sws), Noah (sws), Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws), son of Mary. Naming some messengers of God after a mention of the generic category actually bears reference to the history of prophets. The purpose is that it becomes fully evident that this responsibility was borne by all messengers of God and their companions. The name of Muḥammad (sws) is mentioned the foremost because the real objective is to remind him.

This covenant and promise is referred to in the Qur'ān at various places. In particular, its complete history is stated in Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Here referring to the covenant with each messenger will take space; hence, as an example, the covenant with Moses (sws) is being cited: فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّ اْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا (٧: ١٤٥) (Hold fast to it yourself and also ask your people strongly adhere to this best thing, (7:145)).

The words وَ اَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا express the fact that the Almighty was not the slightest lenient in taking this covenant. He took this covenant in all earnestness and emphatically asked people to strongly abide by it. It needs to be kept in mind that in the first place the word covenant (مِّيْثَاق) is used which itself connotes a strong promise and second it has been qualified by the word غَلِيْظ which further bolsters it.

لِّيَسْـَٔلَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ عَنْ صِدْقِهِمْ ۚ وَ اَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٨﴾[7]

This verse expresses the underlying wisdom for taking this covenant. It was after this preaching by God's messengers that the

7. So that God might question the truthful about their truthfulness [and the disbelievers and Hypocrites about their disbelief and hypocrisy] and for the disbelievers, He has prepared a woeful punishment.

truth was conclusively communicated to their people. It was only after this happened that the justification was provided to God for questioning the truthful about their truthfulness and the disbelievers and the Hypocrites for their disbelief and hypocrisy. Once this questioning was done, reward and punishment was also justified. Without this conclusive communication of the truth if the Almighty had punished people for their errors and blemishes, this would have been against His justice and mercy. Verses 24 and 37-40 ahead further explain this aspect. The following verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' also refers to this very fact, and have I have explained it there as well: لِئَلَّا يَكُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللّٰهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ (٤: ١٦٥) (so that after them people are left with no excuse which they can present before God, (4:165)).

Section II: Verses (9-27)

The succeeding verses describe the events of the battle of Aḥzāb and the purpose is to make clear to the Muslims in the light of the events of this battle what they were told in the beginning: while pursuing God's cause, the Prophet (sws) and his followers should disregard the opposition of their opponents as well as the conspiracies they hatch; they, on the contrary, should fully trust God as He is sufficient for them in this regard. They have observed from their own eyes how God's help descended on them when all their enemies combined and launched an onslaught against them and the hypocrites among the ranks of the believers too tried to rout them through their conspiracies. Yet God's scheme prevailed and their enemies were totally humbled.

The battle of Aḥzāb took place in Shawwāl 5 AH. Some leaders of the Banū Naḍīr had been exiled from Madīnah to Khaybar by the Prophet (sws). These leaders went to Makkah and pleaded before the leaders of the Quryash and convinced them to attack Madīnah. The Quryash were already making plans for this. So as soon as the Jews induced them to battle, it was as if their hearts' desire was fulfilled. After this, they also lured the leaders of the Banū Ghaṭfān and the Banū Hawāzin into this plan. In this way, a strong army of about 10000 people prepared to attack the Muslims. The army of the Quraysh was led by Abū Sufyān while the Banū Ghaṭfān and the

Banū Hawāzin were led by ‘Uyaynah ibn Ḥafṣ and ‘Āmir ibn Ṭufayl respectively. Moreover, Ḥuyy ibn Akhṭab also convinced the Jews of the Banū Qurayẓah to join this united front. Though they had entered into a pact of no-war with the Prophet (sws), they regarded this to be a God-sent opportunity and ignored the pact. They were about eight hundred in number.

When the Prophet (sws) became aware of this attack, he, on the advice of Salmān Fārisī, had a ditch dug around Madīnah in the directions from where the attack was feared. Thus a 3.5 mile long ditch was dug in the North and the West of the city. Almost three thousand soldiers undertook this task, and the Prophet (sws) himself was part of them.

The enemies laid siege of Madīnah and this siege lasted for one month. During this time, a few sporadic instances of throwing arrows and stones did take place. The enemy understood that the Muslims were fully prepared for the battle. Then the enemy became divided because of dispute and moreover a stormy wind uprooted their camps after which they lost heart and Abū Sūfyān announced their return. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُوْدٌ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ؕ
وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ۚ﴿۹﴾ اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَ مِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَ اِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَ بَلَغَتِ
الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَ تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا ﴿۱۰﴾ هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَ زُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ اِذْ
يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗٓ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ اِذْ قَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ
يٰٓاَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوْا ۚ وَ يَسْتَاْذِنُ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ۛؕ وَ مَا هِيَ
بِعَوْرَةٍ ۛۚ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿۱۳﴾ وَ لَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاٰتَوْهَا وَ مَا تَلَبَّثُوْا
بِهَآ اِلَّا يَسِيْرًا ﴿۱۴﴾ وَ لَقَدْ كَانُوْا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُوَلُّوْنَ الْاَدْبَارَ ؕ وَ كَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْئُوْلًا ﴿۱۵﴾ قُلْ
لَّنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ اِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ اَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَ اِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۶﴾ قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ
يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّ لَا نَصِيْرًا
﴿۱۷﴾ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الْمُعَوِّقِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَ الْقَآئِلِيْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ الْبَاْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۸﴾
اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ ۚۖ فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ

فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَ
كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٩﴾ يَحْسَبُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ
فِى الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٢٠﴾ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِىْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ
اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ ۙ قَالُوْا
هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۫ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّآ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهٗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ ۫ وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا
﴿٢٣﴾ لِّيَجْزِىَ اللّٰهُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا
رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَرَدَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا ؕ وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا
عَزِيْزًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيْهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيْقًا
تَقْتُلُوْنَ وَتَاْسِرُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَوْرَثَكُمْ اَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَئُوْهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

Believers! Remember God's favour to you when you were attacked by armies. So We unleashed upon them a stormy wind and also sent armies which you could not see. And God continuously watches whatever you do. Remember when they attacked you from above and from below and when eyes were awe-struck and hearts leapt up to the throats, and you started to have all sorts of thoughts about God. At that time, the faithful were put to test and were made to reel. (9-11)

And when the Hypocrites and those whose hearts are afflicted with an ailment would say: "The promises of God and His Messenger have turned out to be mere fraud," and when one of their groups said: "O People of Yathrib! You cannot stand much longer; so, turn back." And a group from them sought the Prophet's permission, and would say: "Our homes are unsafe," whereas they were not unsafe. These people only wanted to flee. And if they had been attacked from their sides, then asked to give up faith they would have gladly accepted it and very few from them would have desisted from this. Even though they had promised God that they would not turn their backs and promises made with God will be questioned. Tell them: "If you run away from death or slaying, this flight will be of no avail to you. You have very little time to enjoy about." Ask [them:] "Who can save you

from God if He wants to harm you or can prevent Him from showing you mercy?" And they will not find for themselves any protector nor helper other than God. (12-17)

God well knows those among you who hold back others and who say to their brothers: "Join us," and seldom have they been taking part in war. They avoid you. Yet when danger befalls them you would see that they look at you with eyes as the eyes of a person that roll around in fear of death. Then when danger goes away, they talk to you with sharp tongues in greed of wealth. These people did not profess faith; so, the Almighty made their deeds go waste. And this is very easy for God. These people are thinking that the groups of the enemy have not left as yet, and if the groups come again they would desire to be in the villages with the Bedouins and keep asking about your news from there. And had they been with you, even then they would have seldom taken part in the battle. (18-20)

Indeed, the life of God's Messenger has the best example for you. For those who hope to meet God and hope for the Hereafter and remember God in abundance. And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increased their faith and obedience. (21-22)

There are the courageous among the believers who have fulfilled their promise with God. So, some among them have fulfilled their promise and some await to do so, and have not the slightest changed [the promise] so that God may reward the righteous for their righteousness and punish the Hypocrites if He wants or accept their repentance [if they repent]. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful. (23-24)

And the Almighty routed the angry disbelievers, not letting them achieve their aims. And God became sufficient for the Muslims regarding war and God is Powerful and Dominant. And God brought down from their forts these People of the Book who helped the disbelievers and struck awe in their hearts. Some of them you slay and some you imprison. And made you the inheritors of their land, their houses and their wealth. And there is more land as well which you have not yet set foot upon. And God has power over all things. (25-27)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُوْدٌ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ۚ﴿۹﴾[8]

The directive given in verse 3 to trust God is further strengthened by citing examples here from history which depict God's help for the Muslims in the near past. At the time of the Battle of the Ditch, the whole of Arabia attacked the Muslims but no harm came to them whatsoever. The Almighty routed the strong armies of their armies and it became evident to everyone that God is sufficient to trust. If His help is there, the opposition of the whole world cannot harm a person.

Consider the words: فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا. It is evident from various narratives that in the last days of the siege a tempestuous wind blew that uprooted the tents of the army. Food pots and cauldrons turned on their faces, animals of conveyance dispersed and in spite of the biting cold it became difficult to light fire. Pitch darkness prevailed all over. This situation struck awe in the hearts of the Muslims and Abū Sufyān sought relief in backing off from the front.

The words وَّ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا express the fact that with the stormy wind, the Almighty sent armies that were invisible to the Muslims. This is a reference to the armies of angels which always accompany the believers. Though they are not visible, their glowing feats manifest themselves. This encourages the believers and intimidates the enemies. Readers may take a look at what I have written in the exegesis Sūrah al-Anfāl while explaining the battle of Badr. It is evident from the words of this verse that Muslims were not able to see these armies but it cannot be construed from this that the disbelievers too did not see them. It is quite probable that they did see these armies as a result of which they reckoned that the Muslim army was large in numbers and this struck awe in their hearts.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا are almost the same as verse 2 earlier:

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8. Believers! Remember God's favour to you when you were attacked by armies. So, We unleashed upon them a stormy wind and also sent armies which you could not see. And God continuously watches whatever you do.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا. A person can fully trust God if he is convinced that God is بَصِيْرًا (sees all) and خَبِيْرًا (knows all). He is fully aware and informed of the risks and hardships undertaken by the believers.

اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَ مِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَ اِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَ بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَ تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا ﴿۱۰﴾[9]

Consider the part: اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَ مِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ. It is known that the eastern side of Madīnah is situated on a high ground and the western side on a low one. It is evident from various narratives that the Banū Ghaṭfān and some other tribes had attacked from the eastern side and the Quraysh and their allies attacked from the western side.

Consider the words: وَ اِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَ بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ. Eyes are not able to continuously stare at a horrible sight. In Arabic, the expression زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ signifies such a situation. Similarly, the idiom بَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ also signifies a situation of fear, horror and worry.

Though the words وَ تَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا are said in a general way, yet they refer to people weak in faith and inflicted with the ailment of hypocrisy. They were totally taken aback when they witnessed this sight. They began to doubt the promises of God's help and what they had been informed of regarding His majestic works. It will become evident from the gradual progression of the discourse that the reference is to the weak in faith and the Hypocrites. In some later verses, here is how the Qur'ān has praised perseverance and steadfastness of the believers: وَ لَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ قَالُوْا هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ وَ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ وَ مَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّاۤ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا (And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increase their faith and obedience, (33:22)). When this is the state of the true Muslims and obviously the majority of the Muslims consisted of such valiant people, then the verse under discussion can only point to the weak in faith. It is on these very grounds that I regard unreliable the

9. Remember when they attacked you from above and from below and when eyes were awe-struck and hearts leapt up to the throats, and you started to have all sorts of thoughts about God.

narratives found in our books of exegesis which say that at the time of the Battle of the Ditch except for one or two people none among the Muslims could show courage and determination.

هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا ﴿١١﴾[10]

The verse says that these circumstances put the believers into a great trial and they were badly jolted. On the one hand, the enemy was attacking from all sides and on the other there were people within their ranks who lost their verve and grit and started to raise various doubts. However, the believers have to pass through such trials in order that the good among them can be made distinct from the evil elements among them.

وَاِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿١٢﴾[11]

What is stated rather concisely earlier by the words وَتَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا is now elaborated upon. The Hypocrites and those who had malice against Islam in their hearts started to spread the propaganda that the promises made by God and His messenger were mere deception. The purpose of this propaganda was to dishearten the Muslims. Some narratives even record this sarcastic remark: "Though Muḥammad (sws) is assuring us that we will acquire the treasures of Persia and Rome, yet here we are; we cannot even go out of our homes to relieve ourselves." Thus, on the one hand, was the siege of the enemy from all sides of the city and on the other, were these Hypocrites spreading this malicious propaganda among them. It this situation which the Qur'ān has depicted thus in verse 11 earlier: وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا.

An academic point is worthy of attention in this verse. It is said: وَاِذْ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ. The question arises: "Do these words mention two separate groups or do they depict two attributes of a single group of Hypocrites?" By studying parallel verses of the Qur'ān, it becomes evident that the word مَّرَضٌ (ailment) is used in the

10. At that time, the faithful were put to test and were made to reel.

11. And when the Hypocrites and those whose hearts are afflicted with a ailment would say: "The promises of God and His Messenger have turned out to be mere fraud."

Qur'ān for two types of moral ailments: hypocrisy and jealousy. When it occurs with the word hypocrisy, as is the case here, it is used in its second meaning. However, when it is used singly, the context and concomitant indications guide us to which shade in meaning it has been used. In some places, it is used in its general meaning of hypocrisy and at some instances, it means jealousy and malice. A usage in this second meaning can be seen in verse 32 ahead of this very *sūrah*. An even more explicit parallel usage occurs in verse 29 of Sūrah Muḥammad.

It may be kept in mind that there were two types of people among the Hypocrites: there were those who were weak in their determination and will power and there were those who had malice and enmity in their hearts against Islam yet did not openly express this enmity. They wanted to harm the Muslims from within and thus were like snakes in their ranks. To make this group distinct from the general category of Hypocrites the attribute وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ (and those who have an ailment in their hearts) is used. People who do not make a distinction between these two groups are not able to understand the true stress of the Qur'ān at some instances.

وَاِذْ قَالَتْ طَّآىِٕفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يٰٓاَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوْا ۚ وَيَسْتَاْذِنُ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّ بُيُوْتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ۛ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۛ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿١٣﴾[12]

This is a mention of another group among the Hypocrites and it is evident from concomitant indications that the reference is to the Bedouins among them. Among those who had professed faith in the suburbs of Madīnah, there was a group of very die-hard Hypocrites. They are mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Tawbah. The words used for them are: اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّ نِفَاقًا. They claimed to be Muslims after being over-awed by its growing political power, yet their sole concern was their vested interests. If a battle would be at hand, they, in the first place, would try to put various excuses and if ever they would pretentiously

12. And when one of their groups said: "O People of Yathrib! You cannot stand much longer; so, turn back." And a group from them sought the Prophet's permission, and would say: "Our homes are unsafe," whereas they were not unsafe. These people only wanted to flee.

participate in it, they would try more to achieve the objective of the enemy. At the time of the Battle of Ditch also, some of them presented their services to conceal their hypocrisy. Yet all their efforts revolved around causing frustration and discouragement among them. Here in these few verses, it is these Hypocrites who are commented upon.

Consider the words: يٰٓاَهۡلَ يَثۡرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمۡ. Addressing the people of Madīnah by the words "O People of Yathrib" is a clear indication of the fact that their speakers were the Bedouins belonging to the suburbs of Madīnah. If they had been the inhabitants of Madīnah, there was no reason for them to address the brethren of their own city in this manner. Yathrib is the old name of Madīnah. After the Prophet's migration, it came to be called Madīnah al-nabī and later just Madīnah. However, the inhabitants of the villages, especially the enemies, continued to call it Yathrib. Since these people were both villagers and Hypocrites, they did not accept the new name. They would have reckoned that its occupancy by Islam and Muslim must be a temporary phase. The situation would revert back. By referring to this style of address adopted by them, the Qur'ān has actually lifted the veil from their inner-selves.

In order to cause frustration and discouragement in the ranks of the Muslims, these Hypocrites advised the Muslims in a very sincere tone to back off because they would not be able to fight the huge enemy army. A battle in such circumstances would prove fruitless. It would be better if they return to their homes. Their implication would be that in this situation, there is a possibility that their enemies treat them a little leniently but if a war ensues, then they have little chances.

Consider the next part of the verse: وَيَسۡتَاۡذِنُ فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمُ النَّبِىَّ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِنَّ بُيُوۡتَنَا عَوۡرَةٌ. The word عَوۡرَةٌ means "an insecure place." These words depict another group of these Bedouin Hypocrites. They presented this plea before the Prophet (sws) that since their houses are isolate and insecure, they should be granted permission to return to them. The first group tried to cause frustration among the Muslims and discouraged them in order to convince them to return from the battle front while this group tried to find an escape route so that the enemy easily achieves its aim. The words "our houses are insecure" uttered by these Hypocrites indicate that they belonged to the villages in the suburbs of Madīnah. Such an excuse could never have been uttered

by the residents of Madīnah. The details found in history regarding this battle show that prior arrangements had been made to protect women and children.

The words وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۛ اِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْنَ اِلَّا فِرَارًا state that this excuse has no basis. Their houses are not insecure and not prone to danger; these people only want to run away from the battle-front.

وَلَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاٰتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوْا بِهَآ اِلَّا يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٣﴾[13]

The antecedent of the pronoun in اَقْطَارِهَا can be يَثْرِبَ; however, it is evident from concomitant indications that it is بُيُوت (houses). In other words, the excuse of protecting the houses is merely an excuse; they actually want to run away from protecting and defending the cause of religion. The cheapest thing to them is religion. If the enemy attacks their houses and asks them to revert to their previous religion or fight the Muslims, they will accept these demands. I have discussed the word فِتْنَةٌ at various instances in this exegesis. Here it refers to the demand of reversion and apostasy or waging war against the Muslims. Zamakasharī[14] has adopted this view, and I think that it is correct. Verse 91 of Sūrah al-Nisā' points to this category of the Hypocrites in the following words: سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّاْمَنُوْكُمْ وَ يَاْمَنُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ۭ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ اُرْكِسُوْا (٤: ٩١) (you will soon find others who want to make peace with you and also with their own people. But whenever they are called to sedition they plunge into it headlong, (4:91)).

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوْا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُوَلُّوْنَ الْاَدْبَارَ ۭ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿١٥﴾[15]

The necessary requirement of accepting faith and pledging a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws) is that a person should not refrain from sacrificing his life and wealth and in fact becomes liable to sacrifice everything for the cause of God. However, these Hypocrites had given an additional pledge as well: most of them had

13. And if they had been attacked from their sides, then asked to give up faith they would have gladly accepted it and very few from them would have desisted from this.

14. See: al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāff*, vol. 3, 536.

15. Even though they had promised God that they would not turn their backs and promises made with God will be questioned.

not participated in previous battles because of baseless excuses, and had assured the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims that if ever the need arose to fight again they would do so with full fervour. These assurances have been mentioned in the Qur'ān at a number of places. By referring to them, it is said that earlier on they had vehemently promised to fight if the need arose but when this need arose they have come forward with the excuse that their houses are insecure.

The words وَ كَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْئُوْلًا sound a threat to them that they should remember that they will be held accountable for every promise made with God. A person is, in fact, accountable for every wrongdoing; however, the obligation towards a promise made with God is much more. Thus, in Sūrah al-Ṣaff, the words used are: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَ تَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ (٦١: ٢-٣) (Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God's sight that you should say something what you never do, (61:2-3)).

قُلْ لَّنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ اِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ اَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَاِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٦﴾[16]

The verse implies that evading one's obligation for fear of death or execution is not a wise policy at all. It is in fact a very foolish thing to do. Life and death are entirely in the hands of God. If a person shirks a duty imposed on him by God because of such fears, then this, in other words, means that he wants to run away from God. Obviously, there is no possibility of this. If a person in his estimation can escape God like this, then till when can he remain a renegade? One day, he will die and will have to face the God He wanted to escape from. If the words وَ اِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا of this verse are deliberated upon, they mean that the life of such escapers is totally stripped of blessings. Whatever little time they spend here, is devoid of them. The fact is that had they not adopted this policy of escapism, they would still have completed their term of life and earned an eternal kingdom in lieu of a few days of this life.

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ

16. Tell them: "If you run away from death or slaying, this flight will be of no avail to you. You have very little time to enjoy about."

وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٧﴾[17]

In accordance with the linguistic principles of Arabic, a part of a sentence is suppressed before اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً. If this suppression is revealed, the whole discourse would something to the effect: اَرَادَ بِكُمْ اَوْ يُمْسِكُ رَحْمَتَهُ اِنْ رَحْمَةً (or restrain His mercy if He intends to do mercy). There are many examples of such suppression in Arabic. The expression متقدما سيفا أو رمحا is an example of this as well. I have referred to the subtle examples of this style found in the Qur'ān at various places. This style is not found in Urdu. Hence, I have revealed this suppression.

The expression مِّنْ دُوْنِ also means "against" or "in opposition to." I have explained this fact at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The verse means that if a person wants to evade God, he should state who will save him if God wants to harm him. Similarly, in spite of the wishes of a person's enemies, if God wants to be merciful to him, who has the power to stop this? Mercy and harm, both are in the hands of God. So what is the reason for this evasion and escapism?

Since the context occasions a warning, the words وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا specially point to the fact that if God decides to seize them, they should remember that no protector will be able to protect them and no helper will be able to help them. A person can be helped through intercession as was the belief of the Idolaters with regard to their deities and through support and power as well, as is the case of every person of power. Here both of these are refuted.

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الْمُعَوِّقِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَآئِلِيْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَ الْبَاْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٨﴾[18]

An incomplete verb is suppressed before يَعْلَمُ. I have explained this style at a number of places. There is a very severe threat concealed in this. It is said that God has continued to know people among you who stopped their brothers from war and asked these brothers to come to them and these people participated very sparingly in wars.

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17. Ask them: "Who can save you from God if He wants to harm you or can prevent Him from showing you mercy?" And they will not find for themselves any protector nor helper other than God.

18. God well knows those among you who hold back others and who say to their brothers: "Join us," and seldom have they been taking part in war.

The implication is that these people think that no one is aware of their conspiracies. Yet God has always remained informed of them and when this is so, he will not leave them without punishment.

In my opinion, this is a reference to the Hypocrites who not only did not take part in defence but at the same time would stop others who trusted them and would say to them to come to them so that no one can hold them accountable. It needs to be kept in mind that the defence line in the Battle of the Ditch was very long, and hence the Hypocrites had many opportunities to evade their duty. They themselves would evade war and would also try their other brethren to become their associates in this.

Before the indefinite verb يَأْتُوْنَ too, an incomplete verb is suppressed, and the word الْبَأْسَ means "defence." In other words, these people would sparingly take part in the defence of the city and would do so only to show off, and would try to demoralize those who would take part and would call these people to their barracks to make them their associates.

اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾[19]

The expression اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ is connected with the previous sentence: وَلَا يَأْتُوْنَ الْبَأْسَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا. In other words, they would not take part in the defence in the first place, and if they would do so, they would be very stingy in sacrificing their wealth and persons for the Muslims. They desired to become martyrs and *ghāzīs* without spilling a single drop of blood.

The words فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ imply that these people participate in a battle not because they want to make some sacrifice but because they want to register themselves as warriors without risking themselves. Hence, when a dangerous situation would arise on the battle front their eyes would circulate

19. They avoid you. Yet when danger befalls them you would see that they look at you with eyes as the eyes of a person that roll around in fear of death. Then when danger goes away, they talk to you with sharp tongues in greed of wealth. These people did not profess faith; so, the Almighty made their deeds go waste. And this is very easy for God.

here and there as if they are about to die. Only that person can stare death in the face who has the intention to be martyred in the way of God. Even a small danger is enough to expose people who only take part in a battle as a pretentious display.

The word سلق means to talk in a sweet and flattering tone. Hence خطیب سلاق means a orator who has a very sharp tongue.

The words فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ imply that when some danger arises, they become so worried stiff as if they will pass away with anxiety; however, when this danger passes away, they talk in a sweet and flattering way as if it was their valour and courage which stopped the enemy from advancing. Other wise danger was lurking very near.

The expression اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ means that their tongues would become sharp in greed for wealth so that they could gather the maximum amount when the spoils of war would be distributed.

The expression اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ occurs in parallel to اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ at the beginning of the verse. The word اَشِحَّةً is the plural of شحیح. It means both "a stingy person" and "a greedy person." Both these meanings are two aspects of the same personality. In the first part it occurs in the first meaning and in the second part in the second. In other words, such is the nature of their miserliness in the matter of the Muslims that they are not willing to spill even a single drop of blood nor spend a single penny; however, in the matter of spoils of war, they will start blaming everyone out of their greediness.

The words سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ point not only to their sweet talk but also to the bite found in their tongues. The reason is that since the Hypocrites would take part in a battle only to gather the spoils of war, they would even go as far as to blame, censure and curse others to obtain these spoils. So much so, at times they would even blame the Prophet (sws) in showing bias in the distribution of the spoils of war, as has been mentioned earlier in Sūrah al-Nisā', Surah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Tawbah. They would sarcastically say that it is they who have won the war for the rest while others are given more share than them and they are ignored.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا imply that these people lay claim to faith merely through their tongues; they do not actually profess faith. For this very reason, the Almighty has laid

waste their deeds which they apparently did for religion. They will not get any reward for them in the Hereafter. God accepts only those deeds which are done while professing faith.

The words وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا are meant to dispel some many grave misconceptions of people. Many people do not give any importance to intention. If a certain deed of a person is liked by them, they think that in the Hereafter too he will be richly rewarded for it. This, in fact, is against reality. The greatest of deeds has no weight in the eyes of God if it is not done to please Him. He is not in need of any deed. The doers of a deed themselves are in need of it. They alone receive its benefit. It is the law of God that He accepts every deed, whether small or big, which is done in accordance with His directives and purely to please Him. He will totally reject a deed that is done to someone other than Him and will ask its doers to demand its reward from those for whom they did it. This is the case even if this deed is as great as *ḥajj* and *jihād*. It is said that no one should remain in the misconception that it will be difficult for God to do such a thing. On the contrary, it is something very easy for Him. He is not in need of any deed and therefore He is not required to gather all types of deeds and regard them to be useful.

Some people are misled to believe that since God is very merciful and gracious, every righteous deed done in any manner will be accepted by Him. No doubt, God is very merciful and gracious; however, at the same time, He is also has a great sense of honour and is self-sufficient. Hence it is not difficult at all for Him to reject deeds whose acceptance is against His honour. Details of the misconceptions of the Jews regarding the attribute of graciousness of God have been discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

يَحْسَبُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ فِي الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۲۰﴾[20]

The cowardice of these Hypocrites has already been alluded to

20. These people are thinking that the groups of the enemy have not left as yet, and if the groups come again they would desire to be in the villages with the Bedouins and keep asking about your news from there. And had they been with you, even then they would have seldom taken part in the battle.

earlier. This verse sheds further light on this attitude of theirs: it should not be thought that the departing of enemy groups has allayed their fears. These groups have reached their homes after facing defeat; however, the hearts of these Hypocrites are struck with such awe and terror that they think that the enemy groups are still stationed there.

The words وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ فِي الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ imply that now they have somehow unwillingly stayed in Madīnah. However, if the possibility of a second attack arises, they would desire to go and live with the Bedouins in their villages instead of remaining in Madīnah, and keep track of what is happening with the Muslims right from there.

The words وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا assure the Muslims that if they adopt this strategy, it will not harm them. Even if they remain with them, they are not those who will participate in a battle. It is better if they remain away so that others are not influenced by their evil touch. Readers are advised to look up what has been written under the explanation of verse 18 earlier.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ [21]

This verse puts the cowards to shame. They are told that present among them at the battle front was God's Messenger and they observed through their very eyes how he faced all the dangers. So why did they not follow His exemplary behaviour? Why did they remain such cowards?

The words لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا imply that not everyone who claims to be a follower of the Messenger is actually able to follow his exemplary character. Only those people can face the trial of this path who hope to meet God and await the Day of Judgement and who constantly refresh themselves through God's remembrance.

It is evident from this verse that only those people are steadfast and resolute in the path of truth who have a strong faith in God and in the Hereafter and who keep this faith refreshed through God's

21. Indeed, the life of God's Messenger has the best example for you. For those who hope to meet God and hope for the Hereafter and remember God in abundance.

remembrance. Moreover, also evident from this is that the Hypocrites neither have faith in God and in the Hereafter nor keep God in their remembrance. Hence, even after the enemy had been routed, the fear of the enemy did not go away from their hearts.

وَلَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۫ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّاۤ اِيْمَانًا وَّتَسْلِيْمًا ﴿۲۲﴾[22]

In verse 12 earlier, the statement of the Hypocrites and the jealous has been cited: seeing the vast expanse of the enemy army they began to spread the propaganda among the Muslims that the promises made with them by God and His Messenger are proving false. This verse cites the impression of the true Muslims. When they saw the hold of their enemy, they assured their compatriots that this is the same test of which they were already pre-informed by God and His messengers. This is a reference to those verses of the Qur'ān in which Muslims had been forewarned that they would have to pass through many enduring trials before they reach their destined success. Thus the words in Sūrah al-Baqarah are:

اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَاْتِكُمْ مَّثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ؕ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَاْسَآءُ وَالضَّرَّآءُ وَزُلْزِلُوْا حَتّٰى يَقُوْلَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ مَتٰى نَصْرُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ نَصْرَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ (٢: ٢١٤)

Do you think that you would go to Paradise even though you have not encountered the circumstances which were encountered by people before you? Afflictions of hunger and sickness befell them; and so shaken were they that the messenger and the companions who were with him all cried out: "When shall the help of God turn up?" Listen up! God's help is near. (2:214)

In Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, this established practice is referred to by the words:

22. And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increased their faith and obedience.

اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْٓا اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ (٢٩: ٢-٣)

Do people think that they will be allowed to go merely after saying: "We have professed faith," and they will not be tested. And We have indeed tested those before them. Thus God will definitely make distinct those who are truthful in their claim to faith from those who are liars. (29: 2-3)

The words وَ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ imply that the promise of God and His Messenger was not a false one; on the contrary, it proved to be true. People who remain steadfast in this phase will see the truthfulness of the future promises as well that Muslims will become the masters of the treasures of Rome and Persia.

The words وَ مَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّآ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا imply that this test did not weaken them; in fact, it only augmented their faith and obedience. It needs to be kept in mind that the trials people face for the cause of truth highlight the truthfulness of the truthful just as they bring to the fore the weakness of the weak. This is an established practice of God.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهٗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ ۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٣﴾[23]

It has been mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah *al-A'rāf* that when the word رِجَالٌ is used in this way without being defined, it serves to magnify the noun. Hence, if it is translated as the "righteous people" or "commendable people", then this translation would be in line with the essence of the word.

The word نَحْب has a broad connotation. Thus, determination, resoluteness, promises, vows are included in it. Imām al-Bukhārī[24] says that it means عهد (promise) and this explanation of his is in line with the essence of the word as well as what is occasioned by the context.

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23. There are the courageous among the believers who have fulfilled their promise with God. So, some among them have fulfilled their promise and some await to do so, and have not the slightest changed [the promise].

24. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*, vol. 3, 476.

Earlier, in verse 15, it has been stated that the Hypocrites had promised God and His Messenger that they will not turn their backs if ever the chance of any battle arises; yet when the time came, they began finding excuses to run away. Here, in this verse, God has mentioned His faithful people: there are those also among the ranks of the Muslims who sacrificed their lives in order to fulfill the promise they had made with God and those who have not yet fulfilled this promise they are prepared to sacrifice their lives if needed and thereby fulfill their responsibility. The words وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا state that they did not change the slightest the promise they made with God.

لِّيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۲۴﴾ [25]

It is evident from the context and occasion that a verb is suppressed here. In other words, God stirred this battle of the ditch so that it can become a yardstick to judge the righteous from the Hypocrites. Once this judgement is made, God will reward the righteous for their righteousness and punish the Hypocrites if He wants and accept their repentance if they repent.

According to a well-known style of the Qur'ān, examples of which can be seen in this *tafsīr*, the words اِنْ شَآءَ are suppressed after يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ to do away with needless repetition. The will of God is subservient to His wisdom and established practice. Hence, it means that if they repent, they will find God merciful and forgiving: if He intends, He will forgive them. The words of this verse invite the Hypocrites to repent and tell them that there is still a chance for this. If they want, they can once again become worthy of God's mercy by asking for forgiveness from Him. At the same time, they are reminded that all matters rest on the will of God. Hence, instead of depending on false supports, they should consign themselves to God. Those who have interpreted the words اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ to mean that whomsoever God wills to forgive, He will forgive without their repentance have failed to understand the established practice of God

25. So that God may reward the righteous for their righteousness and punish the Hypocrites if He wants or accept their repentance [if they repent]. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.

regarding repentance. No doubt, no one can stop or change His intention, yet His intention is always subservient to the laws which are governed by His own wisdom and justice.

وَرَدَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا ۭ وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيْزًا ﴿٢٥﴾[26]

The words الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا refer to the groups among the allies who had attacked. The verse states that these people had come filled with anger, venom and malice to rout the Muslims; yet God routed them with this anger; they could not vent any part of it. The words لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا imply that they had great plans but none of them materialized even slightly.

The words وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ refer to the fact that Muslims were not left to themselves to defend this dangerous attack of the enemies; God sufficed on their behalf to fight for them. He inflicted a crushing defeat on the enemy through tempestuous winds and a powerful army of angels. They were totally humbled and humiliated.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيْزًا serve as a reminder to the words وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا found in the opening verses of the *sūrah*. God is powerful and dominant; hence, His servants should fully trust Him. If they pursue His cause by trusting Him, He will not leave them helpless. He will send the elements of nature and His angels to help them.

وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيْهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيْقًا تَقْتُلُوْنَ وَتَاْسِرُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَوْرَثَكُمْ اَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَــُٔوْهَا ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾[27]

These verses refer to the Qurayẓah tribe. It has been mentioned earlier that they had struck a treaty of peace with the Muslims. However, when the enemy allies in the Battle of the Ditch attacked Madīnah to rout the Muslims once and for all, they broke this treaty

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26. And the Almighty routed the angry disbelievers, not letting them achieve their aims. And God became sufficient for the Muslims regarding war and God is Powerful and Dominant.

27. And God brought down from their forts these People of the Book who helped the disbelievers and struck awe in their hearts. Some of them you slay and some you imprison. And made you the inheritors of their land, their houses and their wealth. And there is more land as well which you have not yet set foot upon. And God has power over all things.

and sided with the attackers. It is evident from history that Ḥuyy ibn Akhṭab, a famous Jewish leader met Ka‘b ibn Asad who was the leader of the Qurayẓah tribe and enticed him to side with the attackers. Initially, Ka‘b showed some hesitation because of the treaty but later succumbed to the propaganda of Ḥuyy who said that it was for them that he had gathered all Arabia and made them attack Madīnah; now if they do not side with these attackers, then of what use was all these efforts of his. Ḥuyy further told him that this was their best chance to eliminate the Muslims and if they lose this chance, they may regret it; however, at that time regretting will be of no use. These words of Ḥuyy were enough to cast a spell, and the Banū Qurayẓah broke their treaty and became allies of the attackers. This thing was a further cause of worry for the Muslims. They had their forts and barracks very near Madīnah and they had a large number of fighters with them. Their participation boosted the morale of the enemy many times, and this became a very enduring trial for the Muslims. However, just as all the enemy tribes were humbled by God’s help, the Banū Qurayẓah too were routed.

It is evident from history that right after returning from the battlefront, the Almighty directed the Prophet (sws) to attack the Banū Qurayẓah. So, the Prophet (sws) immediately asked the Muslims to launch an attack on them. Muslims laid siege around them and this lasted almost twenty five days. Finally, being awe-struck, they accepted Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh (rta) as an arbitrator and expressed their willingness to abide by his verdict. Sa‘d (rta) passed the verdict that all men capable of fighting a battle should be executed and women and children be made slaves. This verdict was implemented forthwith. The verse under discussion refers to this very incident.

The word صيصة refers to the claw of a cock. Its plural صياصى also connotes the horns of an ox. From here it evolved to mean citadels, forts and garrisons. Initially, the Banū Qurayzah shut themselves in their forts but later getting frustrated at the siege were compelled to come out and give themselves up to the Muslims.

The words وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ imply that God implanted the awe and fear of the Muslims in their hearts in such a manner that they could not even dare resist Sa‘d’s verdict in the slightest way. Muslims killed all their men who could participate in a battle without any

resistance from them and enslaved the rest. The Almighty consigned their whole territory including their houses, forts and all other assets to the Muslims, as implied by the words: وَاَوۡرَثَكُمۡ اَرۡضَهُمۡ وَدِيَارَهُمۡ وَاَمۡوَالَهُمۡ.

The words وَ اَرۡضًا لَّمۡ تَطَـُٔوۡهَا give glad tidings of future victories. Thus besides the immediate gains, they will be given more territories in their possession – territories they have yet to set foot on. God has destined to hand them over to them. This is a reference to the conquests of Khaybar, Makkah, Rome, Syria and other places.

The words وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرًا imply that what the Muslims saw with their eyes was enough to give them this satisfaction that God has power over all things. No one can stop Him from fulfilling His intentions. Hence, believers should fully trust Him.

Section III: Verses (28-35)

In the previous section, Muslims were asked to unite in showing obedience to God and His Prophet (sws). Now in this section the wives of the Prophet (sws) are addressed and asked to remain on guard in the wake of the mischief being spread by Hypocrite men and women. They want to create the ailment of materialism in the hearts of his wives. The fact is that God has chosen them for the companionship of His Messenger so that they can become a means of delivering the divine laws and wisdom which they are acquiring from him. If they discharge their duties imposed on them with regard to their status as his wives, God will grant them great recompense. On similar grounds, their punishment is also very severe if they commit some wrong. Readers may now proceed to study these verses with this background in mind.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ قُلۡ لِّاَزۡوَاجِكَ اِنۡ كُنۡتُنَّ تُرِدۡنَ الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا وَزِيۡنَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيۡنَ اُمَتِّعۡكُنَّ وَاُسَرِّحۡكُنَّ
سَرَاحًا جَمِيۡلًا ﴿۲۸﴾ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُنَّ تُرِدۡنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ وَالدَّارَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡمُحۡسِنٰتِ مِنۡكُنَّ اَجۡرًا
عَظِيۡمًا ﴿۲۹﴾ يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِىِّ مَنۡ يَّاۡتِ مِنۡكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفۡ لَهَا الۡعَذَابُ ضِعۡفَيۡنِ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرًا ﴿۳۰﴾ وَمَنۡ يَّقۡنُتۡ مِنۡكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَتَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا نُّؤۡتِهَاۤ اَجۡرَهَا مَرَّتَيۡنِ ۙ وَاَعۡتَدۡنَا لَهَا
رِزۡقًا كَرِيۡمًا ﴿۳۱﴾ يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِىِّ لَسۡتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيۡتُنَّ فَلَا تَخۡضَعۡنَ بِالۡقَوۡلِ فَيَطۡمَعَ الَّذِىۡ فِىۡ

قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ وَّ قُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿۳۲﴾ وَ قَرْنَ فِیْ بُیُوْتِكُنَّ وَ لَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِیَّةِ الْاُوْلٰی وَ اَقِمْنَ
الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِیْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّمَا یُرِیْدُ اللّٰهُ لِیُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَیْتِ وَ
یُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِیْرًا ﴿۳۳﴾ وَ اذْكُرْنَ مَا یُتْلٰی فِیْ بُیُوْتِكُنَّ مِنْ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ الْحِكْمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِیْفًا خَبِیْرًا
﴿۳۴﴾ اِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِیْنَ وَ الْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَ الْقٰنِتِیْنَ وَ الْقٰنِتٰتِ وَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ وَ الصّٰدِقٰتِ وَ
الصّٰبِرِیْنَ وَ الصّٰبِرٰتِ وَ الْخٰشِعِیْنَ وَ الْخٰشِعٰتِ وَ الْمُتَصَدِّقِیْنَ وَ الْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَ الصَّآىِٕمِیْنَ وَ الصّٰٓىِٕمٰتِ وَ
الْحٰفِظِیْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَ الْحٰفِظٰتِ وَ الذّٰكِرِیْنَ اللّٰهَ كَثِیْرًا وَّ الذّٰكِرٰتِ ۙ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّ اَجْرًا عَظِیْمًا ﴿۳۵﴾

Prophet! Tell your wives: "If you seek the life of this world and all its finery, come, I will grant them to you and release you honourably. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, rest assured that God has prepared a rich recompense for those who continue with grace." (28-29)

Wives of the Prophet! Those of you who commit a blatant lewd act shall be doubly punished. And this is easy enough for God. And those of you who obey God and His Messenger and do righteous deeds, We shall doubly reward them. And We have prepared for them an honourable provision. (30-31)

Wives of the Prophet! You are not like common women, if you fear God. So, be not soft in your speech, lest those who have an ailment in their hearts are led into some futile desire and speak in simple terms. (32)

And stick to your homes and do not adopt the ways of the past *jāhiliyyah*. And adhere to the prayer, keep paying *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the Prophet's House! God seeks only to eradicate filth from you and to fully purify you. And communicate the revelations of God and His wisdom that are recited in your dwellings. Indeed, God is Very Discerning and All-Knowing.

Obedient men and obedient women, believing men and believing women, dutiful men and dutiful women, righteous men and righteous women, steadfast men and steadfast women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, chaste men and chaste women, men and women who remember God in abundance– for them, God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward. (35)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ اِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَ زِيْنَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ اُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَ اُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿۲۸﴾ وَاِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنٰتِ مِنْكُنَّ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۲۹﴾[28]

Our exegetes while delineating the background of this verse say that when after the conquest of Khaybar, Muslims became affluent, the wives of the Prophet (sws) also demanded from him that they be provided the luxuries and comforts of life. This verse actually reprimands them on this demand. In my opinion, this inference is incorrect on a number of counts:

It is evident from the context and occasion of this verse that the events which are being discussed here belong to the fourth or fifth year after migration. The Battle of the Ditch and the battle with the Banū Qurayẓah, and the marriage between Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) and Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) discussed in subsequent verses all belong to 5 AH. Khaybar was yet to be conquered. Earlier in verse 27 the words وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَئُوْهَا in the opinion of our exegetes already refer to the glad tidings.

Secondly, if the demand was to merely increase their maintenance allowance, then this is nothing worth rebuking them in such a manner as to making them part from the Prophet (sws) after giving them some provisions of life. Such a demand does not entail any admonition in the first place and in the second, if anything could most be done, then it was counseling them. They could have been told that if they want to remain with the Prophet (sws), then they must adopt the life of patience and simplicity.

Thirdly, this evil estimation about them cannot be made that at some time they became so overcome with the desire to lead a leisurely and luxurious life that they started to make demands for it, and the situation got so worse that God had to interfere in it and He had to take notice of it to the extent mentioned in these verses.

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28. Prophet! Tell your wives: "If you seek the life of this world and all its finery, come, I will grant them to you and release you honourably. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, rest assured that God has prepared a rich recompense for those who continue with grace."

So, this occasion of revelation is not acceptable to us. Neither do the words of the verse accept it nor the time in which this verse was revealed. Here, I will allude to certain circumstances of those times in the light of this *sūrah* which will help us in determining the true occasion and context of these verses.

Reflection on all the contents of this *sūrah* show that at that time just as the conspiracies and connivances of the Hypocrites to disillusion common Muslims from Islam and the Prophet (sws) had increased, similarly, the women among the Hypocrites had launched a very dangerous campaign to disrupt the comfort of the family life of the Prophet (sws). These women would go to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (sws) and would tell them in very sympathetic terms that they belong to noble and decent families yet their life is without any comfort and ease and that they are living like prisoners; if they had been married to someone else, they would have lived in a luxurious and imperial way in great comfort. At the same time, these Hypocrite women would also tell the wives of the Prophet (sws) that if they get divorced from him, there were many big leaders who were ready to marry them and their lives would then became enviable for others. It will become evident in subsequent verses that whenever the Hypocrites would get a chance to go to the houses of the Prophet (sws) and talk to his noble wives, they, while seizing this opportunity, would necessarily try to give some evil suggestions to them. The real purpose would be to create some mischief and disrupt his family life the way they had done so in the case of ‘Ā’ishah (rta), the details of which are discussed in Sūrah al-Nūr. The least benefit they reckoned that they would get was to create discomfort in the lives of his noble wives and perhaps even get a chance to fulfill their despicable desire of marrying them.

Though the noble wives of the Prophet (sws) were not unaware of these designs of the Hypocrites and had even gone through some bad experiences in this regard yet it is the way of decent, gracious and modest people that if a person talks to them with sympathy and kindness, they gently reply to them even though they may know the ill-intention behind it. The noble wives too because of their graciousness would softly reply to these people. This would create false hope in these mean people that their propaganda is succeeding and soon they will succeed in their objective.

It is in these circumstances that these verses were revealed. Their real addressees are these hypocrite men and women are meant to expose their conspiracies and connivances; however, since their mean intent was hidden, the Qur'ān, instead of addressing them, addressed the Prophet (sws) and his noble wives.

Here this eloquent style should be kept in mind that at times a speech is apparently directed to a group yet the admonition concealed in it is actually directed to someone else.

Readers should now reflect on this verse in this background. After addressing the Prophet (sws), he is told that he should communicate to his wives that if they want the comforts and luxuries of this world, then he will amicably part with them after giving them the provisions of life, and if they want to seek God and His Messenger and the success of the Hereafter, then they should bear in mind that God has prepared a great reward for those among them who will befittingly fulfill the rights of God and His Messenger.

It is evident from history that the Prophet (sws) offered this permission of liberation to his wives, and it was before his most beloved wife 'Ā'ishah (rta) to whom he made this offer the foremost. He directed her to not immediately reply to him and deliberate on this offer and also discuss it with her parents before any response. However, 'Ā'ishah (rta) replied forthwith that she does not need to consult anyone in this matter and that her choice is to live with the Prophet (sws). The Hypocrites must have tried to inveigle her the utmost. When this answer from her created despair in them, one can judge the case of the other wives as well.

In this manner, the Qur'ān once and for all put an end to the conspiracies and connivances of the Hypocrites against the noble wives on the one hand, and, on the other, through this test also made evident this reality that all the noble wives without any exception had chosen God, His Messenger and the Hereafter as their real aim in life. It was this ideology that had associated them to God's Messenger and so strong was this association that no greed or want could supersede it.

The summary of all this discussion is that these verses do not rebuke the noble wives for demanding the luxuries of this world, as is generally understood. Actually, by providing them the freedom of choice, the purpose is to demonstrate their lofty character so that the

hopes of the Hypocrites are permanently dashed to the ground. They had reckoned that by luring the noble wives into asking for the luxuries of this world, they would incline them to their own selves. After this declaration of providing them with freedom each person was given the opportunity to proceed in whatever direction he or she deemed fit. It, however, became clear that the noble wives were chosen by God Himself and no one can break into this sacred area.

Consider the verse: وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُنَّ تُرِدۡنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوۡلَهٗ وَ الدَّارَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡمُحۡسِنٰتِ مِنۡكُنَّ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا (۲۹). The word احسان here means to fulfill the rights of God and His Messenger as well as the responsibilities of the Hereafter in a sincere and befitting manner. Some part of the discourse is suppressed in the verse. This is indicated by the style of the verse itself. If this suppression is unfolded, the overall discourse would be to the effect: Wives of the Prophet! If you seek God and His Messenger and success of the Hereafter, then befittingly and fervently obey God and His Messenger and the responsibilities of the Hereafter. Rest assured that God has prepared a great reward for those among you who fulfill these rights and obligations with احسان. It also becomes indirectly evident from this verse that even for the noble wives mere association with the Prophet (sws) will not be of any benefit to them: the real thing is deeds and obedience to God and that too with احسان.

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنۡ يَّاۡتِ مِنۡكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفۡ لَهَا الۡعَذَابُ ضِعۡفَيۡنِ ؕ وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرًا ﴿۳۰﴾[29]

The previous statement was given through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) because only this was appropriate. Now from this verse, the noble wives are addressed directly by the Almighty and told that He has granted them a high status and position because they are the wives of the Prophet (sws), and as a result they have heavy responsibilities as well. In this regard, they are first told that if they commit some wrong, they will not be judged the way other common Muslims will be judged. They will be evaluated through another standard and their punishment will be twice that of the common

29. Wives of the Prophet! Those of you who commit a blatant lewd act shall be doubly punished. And this is easy enough for God.

Muslims.

The words وَ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا express the fact that they must not remain in the misconception that since they are the wives of the Prophet (sws), punishing them would weigh heavily for God. The law of God is equal for all and He will not show any lenience on the basis of any association with anyone.

This admonition does not necessarily entail that, God, forbid, there was a chance that the noble wives would indulge in wrongdoing. It is merely a reminder of their status and position and so that they are fully prepared to ward off any evil suggestions from Satan. The words فَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ (open lewdness) used here are used in consideration of the hidden designs of the Hypocrites. Day and night, they were actively involved in creating a scandal with regard to the noble wives to satisfy their evil designs and to damage the repute of the Muslims. By using this expression, the Qur'ān has in fact informed the noble wives that the Hypocrites are plotting devilish schemes in the garb of sympathy and concern.

وَمَنْ يَّقْنُتْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ۙ وَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿۳۱﴾[30]

The verse states that just as any wrongdoing from the noble wives entails double punishment, their pious deeds will earn them a double reward. For this reason, those of them who continue to show sincere obedience to the Prophet (sws) and do righteous deeds will be rewarded doubly by the Almighty Who has prepared for them an honourable provision (رِزْقًا كَرِيْمًا). I have explained at another instance that رِزْق signifies God's grace and gifts and the attribute كَرِيْم signifies the fact that this provision of God will not be given to them in charity but as a right and will be given to them forever without any condition or accountability.

It becomes evident from this verse that the accountability before God will relate to the conclusive accountability of the truth and the reward of deeds will be commensurate to the conditions they are done in.

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30. And those of you who obey God and His Messenger and do righteous deeds, We shall doubly reward them. And We have prepared for them an honourable provision.

Since the noble wives were fortunate enough to live in the company of the Prophet (sws), and a Messenger is the greatest means of conclusive communication of the truth, they will have to face a stern accountability. Similarly, since the sincere companionship of a messenger is a difficult task, their reward too shall be double. This has always remained an established law and practice of God in cases of sins and their accountability and it is entirely based on justice.

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِيْ فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ وَّ قُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿۳۲﴾[31]

خضوع means "to express humility" and the expression فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ would mean "do not speak softly and humbly." In normal circumstances, speaking in this manner is what is recommended; however, in certain situations a different attitude is needed. I have already indicated earlier that in those times, Hypocrite men and women day and night fervently wanted to inveigle the noble wives through their evil suggestions and create some scandal in their lives. Since they would always make these suggestions in a very sympathetic manner, the noble mothers of the believers too would respond in a soft manner. This would make these mischief mongers take liberty and they would reckon that they would soon succeed in their conspiracies. It is in these special circumstances that the mothers of the believers were directed to change their attitude. They were told that they were not like ordinary Muslim women; because of their relationship with the Prophet (sws), their good and bad deeds have a special status; their good deeds will became an example for others and any blemish on their part will give the wicked-minded people an opportunity in their own favour; hence they must be very cautious and careful; if the Hypocrites try to implant evil suggestions in their hearts, they should not respond softly to them because of their graciousness for this would create some wrong hope in people who have malice and jealousy in their hearts against God and His Prophet (sws); on the contrary, they should speak in plain and simple

31. Wives of the Prophet! You are not like common women, if you fear God. So be not soft in your speech, lest those who have an ailment in their hearts are led into some futile desire and speak in simple terms.

terms so that those having ill-intent fully realize that their plans are not going to succeed.

The words لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ refer to the status of the noble wives which they had in relation to all other women of the world because of their association with the Prophet (sws). Obviously, after this, every word and deed that emanated from them was regarded as an example for common Muslims, and God regarded them to be the mothers of the believers in their status. It becomes evident from the words اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ that this status of theirs is conditional to piety. If they adhere to piety, they will continue to enjoy this distinct status and if they do not fulfill this condition, then as has been discussed earlier, their accountability will be twice that of the others.

The word مَرَضٌ in فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ refers to malice and jealousy which the miscreant Hypocrites harboured in their hearts for the Prophet (sws). It was because of this ailment that they would persistently strive to malign the noble wives. It was their leader who had plotted the mischief of the *ifk* incident.

The words قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا in وَّ قُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا imply that if there arises a need to talk to such people, then they should be spoken to in plain and simple terms the way a person speaks to a stranger in which there is no trace of any sort of inclination. In other words, the noble wives should not speak softly with these Hypocrites in deference to their sympathetic tone; they are mean people and want to exploit the civilized behaviour of the noble wives.

وَ قَرْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ وَ لَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْاُوْلٰى وَ اَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا ﴿۳۳﴾[32]

This verse provides further guidance to what is being discussed. It asks the noble wives to adopt certain measures that will protect them from the evil designs of Hypocrite men and women, and directs them to certain tasks that behoove their status to accomplish which the Almighty had selected them. In order to understand these directives,

32. And stick to your homes and do not adopt the ways of the past *jāhiliyyah*. And adhere to the prayer, keep paying *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the Prophet's House! God seeks only to eradicate filth from you and to fully purify you.

readers may refresh in their minds what has been said earlier: Hypocrite women were trying to engender and implant the same desires in the hearts of the noble wives as they themselves harboured. For example, they would say that if the noble wives liberate themselves from the Prophet (sws), prominent chiefs of their times would marry them, and they would be able to go out for shopping and leisure-walks after adorning themselves with finery the way wives of affluent people do. The Qur'ān by tacitly referring to these evil suggestions of Hypocrite women advised the noble wives to not go while displaying their adornments the way women would in the time of *jāhiliyyah* used to. This directive is very similar to what a pious father gives to his obedient children when he comes to know that some evil elements are suggesting evil ways to them and trying to lead them astray. If, at that time, a father tells his upright son to fully focus on his education and not adopt the ways of rogues and ruffians, then this does not mean at all that his son has actually adopted their ways or there is a chance that he might do so. In fact, it is a sarcastic remark on these ruffians and is meant to protect people of their ill-ways. Precisely the same directive has been given to the noble wives. The directive is a sarcastic remark on the ways adopted by women of those times and is meant to despise them. However, this remark is not directly addressed to them; it is rather addressed to the noble wives. Otherwise who among these wives could be expected to have this desire to move about outside of their houses or to display their fineries the way women of the *jāhiliyyah* period would do.

Our exegetes think that the attribute الْأُوْلٰى that qualifies الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ refers to the *jāhiliyyah* period of the times of the Prophets Noah (sws) and Idrīs (sws). However, this is a needless effort. In my opinion, this is a very subtle reference to the end of the *jāhiliyyah* culture which the Hypocrite men and women cherished and still hoped that it would survive in spite of the onslaught Islam launched against it. The Qur'ān in order to make them lose all their hopes has called it الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُوْلٰى implying that it is a tale of the past; its era is over. Those who think that it will once again be revived are living in a fool's paradise. Islam and Islamic culture have weakened its roots and if some of its signs remain, they will soon be wiped out. Those who are guarding it are guarding something bygone. If they do not change their attitude,

the day its remaining edifice falls, it will also bury them underneath it.

The words وَ اَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ refer to the fact that what needs to be done is not what the women of the times of the *jāhiliyyah* period do; what needs to be done is to show diligence in adhering to the prayer and in paying *zakāh* and showing sincere obedience to God and His Messenger. These three things are mentioned here as comprehensive directives of religion. The implication is that they should spread this radiance of divine guidance in their circle of activity: their houses – the radiance which the Prophet (sws) and his companions are spreading outside.

The words اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا specially and affectionately address the wives of the Prophet (sws) and assure them that these directives which are being given to them are not meant to put restrictions in their lives. God in fact wants to remove all filth from them and train and educate them in a lofty way so that they can become worthy of the companionship of the Prophet (sws) both in this world and in the Hereafter. The word الرِّجْسَ (filth) is a sarcastic remark on the ornaments and embellishments of the women of high society of those times: these things are not adornments; they are in fact filth which they are wearing. God wants to cleanse the noble wives from this filth.

The real guidance provided by this verse has been discussed earlier; however, there are some more aspects in it which are worthy of consideration.

Firstly, the real circle of activity of a woman is the house. She should try to confine all her activities in it and if there ever arises the need to go out from her house, then she must abide by the bounds stated later in this *sūrah*.

Secondly, if women go out of their house while embellishing themselves, then this is not a sign of advancement of a society; it is rather a relegation to the period of the "first" *jāhiliyyah*.

Thirdly, it is the noble wives who primarily occupy the status of the household (*ahl al-bayt*) of the Prophet (sws). This verse is an explicit evidence to this usage. Other parallels of this also exist in the Qur'ān. No possibility exists of regarding anyone except the noble wives as the household of the Prophet (sws). If anyone else is to be included in this connotation, then it has to be in a secondary way and

not in a primary one.

وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلٰى فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِيْفًا خَبِيْرًا ۝۳۴ [33]

The verse spells out to the noble wives their real objective in life. God has not chosen them for what the Hypocrite women are inviting them to; their real responsibility is to communicate the verses of the Qur'ān and the wisdom they are being taught in their houses. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the just as Muḥammad (sws) is a prophet to men, he is also a prophet to women. Just as he would teach outside his home, he would also teach within the confines of his home. Just as revelations would be sent to him while he was in his house, they were also sent to him while he was outside it. Moreover, just as every word of his would be a source of guidance for people, in a similar way, every deed of his too would be a source of guidance for people. His life was not bifurcated into "private" and "public" categories; on the contrary, every moment of his life was devoted for the instruction and education of the *ummah*. For this, just as it was essential that his brave companions remain with him like a shadow in his outside life in order to preserve all his deeds, it was similarly essential that every moment of his life inside his home be preserved. This was obviously only possible through his wives. Thus, it is known that the extent of the words and deeds of the Prophet (sws) spread through them is no less than what was spread by other companions. And it is also evident from this verse that it was the Almighty Who Himself directed the noble wives to adopt this mission. Their purpose was not to gather the pebbles of this world but to distribute the pearls of knowledge and wisdom among people which were being rained down upon them. In this writer's opinion, this is one of the reasons why the Prophet (sws) was allowed to marry more wives. More will come on this later.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ لَطِيْفًا خَبِيْرًا assure the noble wives that if their duty is confined within their homes, all their services are in the knowledge of God. He has the knowledge of the minutest of things and is fully aware of them. He is well informed of all their needs and deeds.

33. And communicate the revelations of God and His wisdom that are recited in your dwellings. Indeed, God is Very Discerning and All-Knowing.

They should fulfill their obligation by trusting Him. He Himself is sufficient to look after their needs.

اِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ وَالصّٰدِقِيْنَ وَالصّٰدِقٰتِ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰبِرٰتِ وَالْخٰشِعِيْنَ وَالْخٰشِعٰتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَالصَّآئِمِيْنَ وَالصّٰٓئِمٰتِ وَالْحٰفِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَالْحٰفِظٰتِ وَالذّٰكِرِيْنَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذّٰكِرٰتِ ۙ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٣٥﴾[34]

This verse comprehensively states all positive and negative directives that were miscellaneously mentioned earlier. The purpose is to point out the attributes of the society envisaged by God and His Messenger. In other words, this verse actually places a mirror before believing men and women so that they can develop themselves in its light and at the same time protect themselves from the Hypocrite men and women. They were trying to lure them back into the desolate darkness of *jāhiliyyah* from which God and Messenger had rescued them. The attributes spelled out in this verse are ten and the miscellaneous directives given earlier are also amount to ten. Here, since the noble wives are specially addressed as the purpose is to delineate the building blocks of an Islamic society, women are mentioned with men side by side and not in a secondary way. Women constitute half of a society and also have the same rights as men. They have a greater role than men in the betterment of a society or otherwise.

The attributes enlisted in the verse are the following:

1. Obedience (*islām*)
2. Faith (*īmān*)
3. Dutifulness (*qunūt*)
4. Truthfulness (*ṣidq*)
5. Steadfastness (*ṣabr*)
6. Humility (*khushū'*)

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34. Obedient men and obedient women, believing men and believing women, dutiful men and dutiful women, righteous men and righteous women, steadfast men and steadfast women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, chaste men and chaste women, men and women who remember God in abundance – for them, God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.

7. Charitableness (*ṣadaqah*)
8. Fasting (*ṣawm*)
9. Chastity (*'iffat*)
10. God's remembrance (*dhikrullāh*)

These attributes are ten in number. Deliberation shows that all aspects of Islamic morality and conduct are summed up in them, and since these are mentioned in the form of adjectives, they are meant to be found as persistent traits of the society. In other words, every person of the society, whether man or woman, must reflect on them.

Some of the attributes mentioned related to the rights of God and some others relate to the rights of human beings and some others to self-improvement.

Islām and *īmān* (obedience and faith) comprehensively refer to religion as a whole. The former is its outward aspect and the latter, its inner one.

Qunūt (dutifulness) occurs in verse 31 of this *sūrah*. It signifies being dutiful to God and His Messenger with full devotion, total compliance and complete sincerity.

Ṣidq (truthfulness) relates to complete harmony and strength of words, deeds and intention. In verse 23 earlier, it is said: صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ (those who fulfilled their promise with God). Viewed thus, it is the direct opposite of hypocrisy.

Ṣabr refers to perseverance, steadfastness and resoluteness. A person who stands like a wall against every fear and greed that arises from within him or outside him and is also satisfied and happy with God is a person endowed with *ṣabr*. It is on this trait that the whole edifice of religion stands.

Khushū' means humility and being down to earth. This is engendered in a person as a result of the true comprehension of God's greatness and majesty. This trait makes a person bend down before God and also makes him gentle and merciful towards fellow human beings. It is the opposite of arrogance which is the foundation of all individual and collective evils whether they belong to the rights of God or to human beings.

Taṣadduq means to be charitable. It specially relates to the rights of human beings. When a person curbs his desires and sacrifices his own needs to spend on others, then this testifies to his faith in God

and the Hereafter and this attitude gradually strengthens his faith.

Ṣawm produces self-control and self-discipline. I have discussed its effects while explaining verses 183-187 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Patience is the foundation of a person's character and fasting is the greatest means to engender patience in a person.

Ḥifẓ al-furūj signifies chastity and modesty which is the result of self-control. The most potent weapon in the hands of Satan to cause disruption in the society is that through his propaganda he destroys chaste and modest behaviour in men and women. Here too it has been mentioned that Hypocrite men and women would try to incite the noble wives to display their adornments and finery so that the whole Muslim society is lured into lewdness.

Dhikhrullāh is the fountainhead and guardian of all the afore-mentioned traits. The more a person remembers God, the more soundly these traits develop in his personality. It is God's remembrance which is in fact the guardian of the whole religion and the prayer is another name for this very remembrance. Thus, at many instances in the Qur'ān, the prayer is mentioned as the protector and guardian of religion and morality, and we have already discussed this aspect at these relevant places.

Section IV: Verses (36-48)

Coming up is the incident between Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) and Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta), and this also relates to what has been discussed in the previous section. Hypocrite men and women stirred up a lot of mischief with regard to this incident that gave rise to all sorts of questions. God answered all these questions which actually explain many aspects of religion.

For example:

– The right of God and His Messenger is the greatest. Hence, when in some matter, their intention is known, then a person's own intention must be brought in subservience to it.

– The obligation of a messenger as God's envoy is to urge people to God's directives and to implement them. So when God gives a directive, it is his duty to obey it and disregard any opposition or rebukes in this matter.

– The Prophet (sws) was directed to take practical steps to eradicate

the concept regarding the wife of an adopted son that prevailed in the *jāhiliyyah* period. He was emphatically directed to not care about any mischief that the miscreants create in this regard.

– Since Muḥammad (sws) was the last of God's prophets, it was essential that all aspects of religion be brought to a completion through him and no shortcomings remain in any aspect.

– A delineation of God's great favour to mankind by sending a Prophet to them and of the obligations this *ummah* owes to him.

Though these hints are enough to understand this section, yet detailed out below is a brief summary of the marriage of Zaynab (rta) and Zayd (rta) mentioned in these verses so that while discussing the verses minute details are not needed to be stated.

Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (rta) belonged to the tribe of Kalb. He was caught in an enemy raid and enslaved. Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām bought him for his paternal aunt Khadījah (rta). When the latter married Muḥammad (sws), she gifted Zayd (rta) to him. In this manner, he got the coveted position of being his slave. How much Zayd (rta) valued this slavery can be gauged from the fact that when his father and uncle came over to demand his freedom from the Prophet (sws), he gave Zayd (rta) the choice to either go away with his father or remain with him. At this instance, the example set by Zayd (rta) for his love for the Prophet (sws) will be forever remembered in history. In spite of being granted the choice to freedom, he chose slavery of the Prophet (sws) instead. Ḥafiẓ, perhaps has penned the following couplet, in deference to this incident:

بولائے تو کہ گر بندہ خویشم خوانی

از سر خواجگیٔ کون و مکان بر خیزم

(I swear by your friendship that if you accept me as your slave, I will abandon the wealth and status of this world in exchange of this.)

After this, the Prophet (sws) set him free. He loved Zayd (rta) since the very beginning because of his qualities; however, this incident increased his love for him manifold. So much so, when people saw his love and attention towards Zayd (rta), they thought that perhaps he has made Zayd (rta) his adopted son.

It is evident from various incidents that Zayd (rta) had

administrative and martial qualities. At many instances, the Prophet (sws) deputed him as the leader of military campaigns. At times, he even remained the ruler of Madīnah in the absence of the Prophet (sws).

The Prophet (sws) wedded him to his paternal cousin, Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta), to grant him favour and respect. She belonged to the tribe of Banū Asad. Her mother was Umaymah bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. When the Prophet (sws) proposed Zayd (rta) to marry her, her relatives objected by saying that Zayd (rta) was a liberated slave and also not of the same status as Zaynab (rta). However, the Prophet (sws) wanted that the concepts of people about slaves should change and hence he insisted on this marriage. Finally, Zaynab (rta) expressed her consent and this marriage was formalized.

After this marriage, Hypocrite men and women launched this malicious propaganda that Muḥammad (sws) had wedded off a woman of noble descent to his liberated slave. A society does not easily accept such social reforms. Hence, this propaganda created an atmosphere of opposition against this marriage. Hypocrite women in particular tried their best to inveigle Zaynab (rta). They appealed to her that it was a matter of great injustice to be married to someone who was a former slave. Being a human being, this enticing talk must have had its affect on her.

Zayd (rta) was a sensitive and humble person who had a great self-esteem. In spite of the love and affection shown by the Prophet (sws), he had not forgotten his former status. On the other hand, Zaynab (rta) had a somewhat aggressive and forceful temperament. In normal circumstances, this does not impede a healthy social set up. However, since the Hypocrites had contaminated the atmosphere with their evil-mongering, Zayd (rta) began to think that Zaynab (rta) regards herself to be superior to him, and does not like this relationship. He finally decided to divorce her to relieve her of her misery and to also relieve himself of this burden. However, before taking a practical step in this regard he thought of finding out the opinion of the Prophet (sws) too because it was he who had been instrumental in making this marriage happen. When he mentioned his intent before the Prophet (sws), he asked him if something from her had created a doubt in his mind. Zayd (rta) replied in the negative and stated that she does have a consideration for her family nobility

and also expresses it and this hurts him. The Prophet (sws) emphatically stopped him from divorcing her and asked him to fear God in this matter because a mere personal impression is not a valid reason for divorce.

Zayd's intention to divorce Zaynab (rta) was worrisome for the Prophet (sws) for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier, he himself had initiated this marriage for the realization of a noble objective. It was thus his natural desire, contrary to that of Hypocrite men and women that this turn out to be a successful union.

Secondly, this divorce would dent the social reputation of Zaynab (rta) very much and her grief would become twofold. First she had heard the reproaches of Hypocrite men and women on getting married to a liberated slave and second, in case of divorce, she would be called a divorcee of a liberated slave.

Thirdly, the Prophet (sws) considered himself responsible for the whole incident and hence regarded it essential to show extra affection to Zaynab (rta). In his heart, he thought that if this divorce takes place, the only option left to appease the emotions of Zaynab (rta) would be to marry her. However, in this situation there was a chance of an even greater ordeal taking place: people would say that the Prophet (sws) had married the wife of his adopted son. A further complexity in this regard was that the Prophet (sws) already had four wives and hence could not marry further.

As a result of all these reasons, the Prophet dearly wanted that Zayd (rta) not divorce his wife. So he emphatically stopped him from doing so. However, Zayd (rta) could not come to grips with his circumstances. He concluded that all this commotion was the result of his marriage and the only remedy to this situation was divorce, so that Zaynab (rta) is relieved of her ordeal and he too finds solace. He thus divorced her. Zaynab (rta) was grief-stricken on this. Narratives say that when she heard of this divorce the words اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَ اِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ (We are for God and to Him shall we return) spontaneously came out of her mouth.

When matters reached this extent, the Prophet (sws), as mentioned earlier, decided to marry Zaynab (rta) but because of the *jāhiliyyah* custom as per which the wife of an adopted son was prohibited for marriage and because he already had four wives, he was hesitant to

take this step. Finally, the Almighty bade him to marry disregarding any opposition from people so that this step could eradicate a wrong custom and an unnatural restriction that had found its way in a religion so akin to human nature is eliminated. As a result of this directive from God, the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab (rta).

Described above is the real form of the incident that I have gauged after critically evaluating all the narratives. The reason for these details is that the Orientalists have given it a very evil shape because of their exaggerations and fabrications and what is sorrowful is that they have gathered the content of these misrepresentations from the *tafsīr* and *sīrah* works of Muslim authors.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَ مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّ لَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗۤ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۳۶﴾ وَ اِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْۤ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَ تُخْفِيْ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِيْهِ وَ تَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰىهُ ؕ فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ حَرَجٌ فِيْۤ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ؕ وَ كَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾ مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيْمَا فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ ؕ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَ كَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرَا ﴿۳۸﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ يَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَ لَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿۳۹﴾ مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَ لٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَ خَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۴۰﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۴۱﴾ وَّ سَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا ﴿۴۲﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ مَلٰٓئِكَتُهٗ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَ كَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا ﴿۴۳﴾ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿۴۴﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّ مُبَشِّرًا وَّ نَذِيْرًا ﴿۴۵﴾ وَّ دَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَ سِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿۴۶﴾ وَ بَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۴۷﴾ وَ لَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ دَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۴۸﴾

There is no room for a believing man or woman that if God and His Messenger have decided a matter, then they should have a say in it. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed into open error. (36)

And when you were saying to him whom God and yourself have favoured: “Retain your wife and fear God,” and you were hiding in

your heart what God was to reveal. And you were afraid of people although God is more worthy that you fear Him. Thus when Zayd severed his relationship with her, We wedded her to you so that it should not be a difficulty for believers to wed the wives of their adopted sons when they break their relationship with them. And God's verdict had to be implemented. (37)

And there is no difficulty for the Prophet in what God has made obligatory upon him. This is the established practice of God regarding people of the past. And a time was fixed for God's verdict. They communicated the messages of God and feared him alone and did not fear anyone except God. And sufficient is God to take account. (38-39)

Muhammad is not father to any man among you. In fact, he is the Messenger of God and the seal of the Prophets. And God has knowledge of all things. (40)

Believers! Remember God in great abundance and extol him morning and evening. It is He Who sends His blessings on you and His angels too to bring you out from darkness into light and He is ever merciful to the believers. On the day they meet Him their greeting shall be: "Peace!" and He has prepared for them a rich recompense. (41-44)

O Prophet! We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner and as one who shall call men to God by His permission and as a shining lamp. And give glad tidings to the believers that there is a great blessing for them from God. And do not pay heed to the disbelievers and the Hypocrites and ignore the harms they cause. And trust God and sufficient is God to trust. (45-48)

Explanation

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا ۝[35]

This verse serves as a prelude to the incident coming up in the succeeding verses. What is said here is not merely related to Zayd (rta) and Zaynab (rta). It is a statement of a general principle. Earlier

35. There is no room for a believing man or woman that if God and His Messenger have decided a matter, then they should have a say in it. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed into open error.

in verse 6, it was said: اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوۡلٰی بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ (and the right of the Prophet is greater on the believers than they have on one another). In the light of this very premise, it is now stated as a principle that when God and His Messenger take a decision in a matter, then there is no room for any hesitancy for believing men and women. The decisions taken by a messenger of God is with His permission; Hence, the messenger must be obeyed in the absolute sense. No one after this has the right to object to these decisions or to disobey them. Those who disobey them will stray far into error.

It needs to be kept in mind that this injunction relates to the situation when it is clearly known that the Prophet has given an explicit directive. For sometimes, some of his statements were in the form of suggestions. Hence when the companions would come to know that these were not from God but from the Prophet (sws) himself, they presented their own counter suggestions as well and at times they were even accepted by him.

It is evident from the afore-mentioned details regarding Zayd (rta) and Zaynab's (rta) marriage that none of them defied the Prophet's decision. When the Prophet (sws) proposed to Zaynab (rta) for Zayd (rta), she knew that this was not a directive; it was merely a suggestion and she was free to express her willingness or otherwise. Later, when she came to know that this was the Prophet's wish that this marriage take place, she accepted the proposal. A similar situation arose when after Zayd's divorce, the Prophet (sws) proposed to Zaynab (rta). Here again she did not take this to be His decision and only regarded it to be a suggestion. Thereupon she had replied that she will not take a decision without doing *istikhārah*. Thus it was after *istikhārah* that she accepted this proposal.

Similarly, Zayd (rta) did not defy any directive of the Prophet (sws). He regarded the Prophet (sws) asking him to refrain from divorcing Zaynab (rta) as an advice and not a decision. He thought that if this was the wish of the Prophet (sws), then he should try to not divorce her; however, the final decision lies with him in this matter. Thus when he felt that it was not possible for him to pull along this marriage, he divorced her.

In my opinion, what is mentioned in the verse is a general principle whose revelation had been occasioned by the circumstances. It became evident from it that it is not permissible for believing men

and women to defy a directive of the Prophet (sws) in any circumstances. Such defiance would be against the requisites of faith, and he who is guilty of it strays far in error. It was essential to make this requirement of faith evident to Hypocrite men and women whose attitude is under discussion since the very beginning of this *sūrah* so that they get around to obey him completely. However, if they are not ready to do this, they should get ready to face its consequences.

وَاِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِیْٓ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَاَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِ اَمْسِكْ عَلَیْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللّٰهَ وَتُخْفِیْ فِیْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِیْهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰىهُ ؕ فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَیْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَیْ لَا یَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ حَرَجٌ فِیْٓ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِیَآىِٕهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾[36]

This verse alludes to the actual incident. Zayd (rta) is mentioned here by the attribute: اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِ. In other words, he was someone who found favour with both God and His Messenger. There is a special reason for mentioning him with this attribute. It has been mentioned earlier that Hypocrite men and women tried their best to belittle him in the eyes of people by labeling him a slave so that they succeed in their proposed malicious campaign. It is evident how hurt Zayd (rta) would have been by this but he remained fully patient. It was a result of this patience that God rewarded him by mentioning him with this attribute. This would make it clear upon those who had tried to humiliate him that he whom they wanted to disgrace has found favour with God and His Messenger. Obviously one who has found favour at such a level does not need any other accolade.

God's favour is generally granted to everyone. Whatever a person gets is from God. However, if Zayd's (rta) matter is reflected upon, one will realize that his case was similar to that of Joseph (sws). He was imprisoned in a plunder raid and probably remained the slave of a Christian and then was sold in this capacity. Finally, the Almighty

36. And when were saying to him whom God and yourself have favoured: "Retain your wife and fear God," and you were hiding in your heart what God was to reveal. And you were afraid of people although God is more worthy that you fear Him. Thus when Zayd severed his relationship with her, We wedded her to you so that it should not be a difficulty for believers to wed the wives of their adopted sons when they break their relationship with them. And God's verdict had to be implemented.

through His own planning gradually led him to the Prophet (sws). After this, the doors of blessings opened to him both in religious and in worldly affairs.

The Prophet's favour on him was that as a result of serving him, Zayd (rta) was blessed with the treasure of Islam. He showed such love and affection to him that people thought that he was his adopted son. The Prophet (sws) liberated him from slavery and wedded him to his cousin sister. This meant that Zayd (rta) entered the house of the Prophet (sws). No familial honour can be greater than this.

The words وَ اِذْ تَقُوْلُ before اَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ shows that the Prophet (sws) must have repeatedly requested Zayd (rta) to not divorce Zaynab (rta) and fear God. Had he said this only once, the word used should have been قُلْتَ instead of تَقُوْلُ. It is evident from this that Zayd (rta) must have expressed his intention many times before the Prophet (sws) and each time he was stopped by him and asked to fear God.

It is also evident from the words وَاتَّقِ اللّٰهَ that the Prophet (sws) must have said the words to emphatically stop Zayd (rta) and did not find it appropriate for him to take this step. It has been mentioned earlier that when the Prophet (sws) had asked him if the reason for his divorce was something that Zaynab (rta) had done, he had emphatically replied in the negative. The only grievance that he himself had was expressed by him in the words تتعظم علی لشرفها (because of her noble lineage she has a sense of superiority over me). Obviously, this is not enough to divorce a wife. This could be because of Zayd's (rta) own over sensitivity than that of Zaynab's (rta) air of superiority especially in the atmosphere which had been created by Hypocrite men and women. It is because of this background that the Prophet (sws) asked him to fear God and not take a step in frenzy. However, Zayd (rta) was deeply influenced by the propaganda raised by the opposition and this owed much to his own decency and a regard for Zaynab's (rta) emotions. He felt that because of him Zaynab (rta) is being targeted and jeered at. The only remedy to this is to divorce her and provide her solace from the sharp tongues of the critics.

This sentence وَ تُخْفِيْ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ مَا اللّٰهُ مُبْدِيْهِ وَ تَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشٰهُ is grammatically in the category of state (*hāl*) ie.: when you were telling Zayd not to divorce his wife and fear God at times you were

hiding something in your heart which God was to reveal however.

I will not comment on the baseless narratives which some of our careless exegetes have cited while explaining the above words. In this regard, Ibn Kathīr has very rightly said:[37] احببنا ان نضرب عنها صفحا لعدم صحتها فلا نوردها (These narratives are baseless; hence we have ignored them and am not citing them here). I agree with this comment. I regard it to be a sin to cite them even for the purpose of refutation. May God forgive Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. He does not exercise caution in citing narratives.

I have already alluded to the real nature of the incident. Since the Prophet (sws) was instrumental for this marriage because he wanted to raise the status of slaves, it was his deep desire that it should succeed. Thus he emphatically tried to stop Zayd (rta) from divorcing her. The Prophet (sws) reckoned that if this divorce takes place, Zaynab (rta) will doubly feel its brunt: she bore the censuring of her enemies and later was afflicted with the stigma of being a divorcee of a liberated slave. The only option that would be left to comfort and solace her and to make amends for this situation would be that he himself marry her. However, doing this was sure to produce a great propaganda and mischief from the Hypocrites as they would say the he had married the wife of his adopted son. He did not want to get involved in this. Thus he dearly desired that this divorce not take place. However, God wanted that it does take place so that through the hands of the Prophet (sws) a wrong custom of the *jāhiliyyah* period be reformed. God also wanted that messengers should not care about the rebukes of the critics in matters of religion and practically show this.

The words وَ تَخۡشَی النَّاسَ ۚ وَ اللّٰہُ اَحَقُّ اَنۡ تَخۡشٰہُ refer to the same principle alluded to in verse 1-3 and 7 of this *sūrah*. In verses 38-39, a further explanation of this principle is coming up. The greatest impediment in the way of adhering to the precepts of religion is fear of people and interests. For this reason, the Almighty has imposed this responsibility on His messengers that in matters of religion they should fear God and give regard to no one except Him. Thus the whole history of God's messengers bears witness that they braved the storms of this path and faced the greatest of dangers to discharge this

37. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 492.

responsibility. They left this practice of theirs as an example for those after them who would take up the duty of serving religion the way they did.

The words فَلَمَّا قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ حَرَجٌ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِ اَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ اِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا imply that when Zayd (rta) completely severed his relationship from Zaynab (rta), the Almighty made arrangements to reveal the secret the Prophet (sws) harboured in his heart which he did not want to reveal for fear of rebukes from people. The Almighty Himself wedded him to Zaynab (rta) so that the unnatural prohibition of marriage with the wife of an adopted son is done away with and an unwanted restriction in this matter is lifted from people.

The word وَطَرًا means "need" and "requirement." From here the meaning of relationship and association is incorporated in it. A person necessarily gets associated with what he needs. The words قَضٰى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا mean that Zayd (rta) totally severed his relationship from Zaynab (rta). The benefit of using this word instead of the word divorce is that it refers to the end of the post-divorce *'iddat* period as well after which a husband's relationship with his wife completely ends.

The word زَوَّجْنٰكَهَا implies that the Prophet (sws) was hesitant in this marriage because of fear from people's comments but God through His directive wedded her to him. It is evident from this that the Prophet (sws) undertook this marriage at God's behest. It is mentioned in historical narratives that after the *'iddat* period had ended, the Prophet (sws) proposed to Zaynab (rta) through Zayd (rta) himself. She accepted the proposal after doing *istikhārah*. Her brother, Abū Aḥmad ibn Jaḥash solemnized this marriage. The Prophet (sws) fixed the dower at 400 *dirhams* and threw a very elaborate wedding banquet (*walīmah*). Some people have concluded from the word زَوَّجْنَا that the wedding took place in the heavens and no need arose to have it conducted on earth. However, Ibn Hishām has mentioned the details of this marriage which I have alluded to above. Hence, the correct version of this incident is that at the behest of God, this marriage was conducted in the way marriages have been prescribed by God and His Messenger.

The words وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا imply that when the time came for the reformation of this *jāhiliyyah* custom, it was set right at that time

according to the divinely prescribed methodology. The propaganda and mischief of the enemies could not the slightest hamper this scheme of God.

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيْمَا فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ ؕ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرَا ۙ﴿۳۸﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿۳۹﴾[38]

These verses sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): these phases of his life are not meant to put him into some bother or discomfort nor are they specific to him. All previous messengers have also passed through them. This is an established practice of God which He has fixed in accordance with His wisdom. In other words, such difficult circumstances faced by messengers of God are meant to instruct and test them and befall them precisely as God has ordained for them. These tests bring to the fore their hidden potentials and the sincerity or the lack of it on the part of their followers.

The expression فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ has a different meaning from فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْه. The latter means that God has made something obligatory on someone while the former means that God has ordained certain circumstances for someone.

The linguistic style found in سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ can be seen in earlier verses of the Qur'ān. If all the suppressed parts of this sentence are accounted for, it will be something to the effect: سَنَّ اللّٰهُ ذَالِكَ سُنَّةً فِي الاَنْبِيَآءِ (This is an established practice prescribed by God for His prophets).

The words وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُوْرًا imply that God had fixed a time for the implementation of His decision. When it came, it was implemented. It is evident from this that nothing in life occurs by chance. It occurs in accordance with the program set for it by God. Hence one should not get worried by a matter by attributing to chance. Nor should one ignore it. It should be considered from God and should be faced in a manner that befits the requirement of faith.

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38. And there is no difficulty for the Prophet in what God has made obligatory upon him. This is the established practice of God regarding people of the past. And a time was fixed for God's verdict. They communicated the messages of God and feared him alone and did not fear anyone except God. And sufficient is God to take account.

The words الَّذِيْنَ يُبَلِّغُوْنَ رِسٰلٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ اَحَدًا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ imply that it is the attribute of the previous prophets that they would communicate the messages of God and they never cared for anyone in this matter other than God. In other words, the responsibility the Almighty imposed on the previous prophets and which they discharged by disregarding the reproaches of a reproacher has been imposed by Him on Muḥammad (sws) as well. Hence it is his obligation as well to discharge it by disregarding the reproaches of a reproacher the way his predecessors did.

Ibn Kathīr and al-Zamakhsharī[39] are of the opinion that the word حَسِيْب in وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا means "helper." In other words, God is sufficient to protect people from all dangers. If this interpretation is accepted, the context is very evident, and if this word is interpreted in its general meaning of "someone who takes account," then this part of the verse will serve as a warning. It would imply that if there is any negligence in communicating the message of God because of fearing others or giving regard to them, then it must be kept in mind that God is sufficient to take account.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۴۰﴾[40]

This verse addresses those people who by regarding the Prophet (sws) as the father of Zayd (rta) had worked up this whole mischief and propaganda. The verse states that Muḥammad (sws) is father to no man; he is God's messenger and the seal of prophets. He has discharged his responsibility imposed on him in the capacity of a prophet and messenger of God, and since he is also the last of the prophets, it is essential that this evil custom be reformed through him. Had there been the possibility of another prophet after him, God could have delayed this reformation; however, no prophet was to come and religion had to reach its completion through him. Hence every deviant and wavered practice had to be set right through him.

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39. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 493; al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāff*, vol. 3, 552.

40. Muhammad is not father to any man among you. In fact, he is the Messenger of God and the seal of the Prophets. And God has knowledge of all things.

The implication is that his matter must not be viewed in the light of various hypothetical statements people have formed; it should be viewed in the light of his real position and status and the responsibility it entails. If his addressees do not recognize his real position and status, they will find objections in many other spheres as well whereas he has to undertake matters in these spheres as directed by the Almighty while disregarding all reproaches. His foremost addressees must also bear in mind that he is a messenger of God sent to them. If they deny him, they will not be able to escape from the established practice of God He has prescribed for those who deny His messengers and which always materialized.

The words مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ primarily dispel the misconception in which those people were afflicted with who had come to regard the Prophet (sws) to be Zayd's (rta) father. However, it was not merely said that the Prophet (sws) is not the father of Zayd (rta); the words actually say that he is father to no man. This has added stress in the whole statement and it also reflects the actual situation because all of the Prophet's male offspring died in infancy and thus could not technically be called men (رِّجَال).

Consider next the portion: وَ لٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَ خَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ. The difference between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*) has been explained at many instances of this *tafsīr*. Here this much should be kept in mind that the relationship between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*) is that of the general and the specific. Every messenger (*rasūl*) is always a prophet (*nabī*) but the reverse is not necessarily true. Hence if Muḥammad (sws) is the final prophet, then he is all the more the final messenger. Some deviant sects say that the Qur'ān has regarded him as the final prophet (خاتم الانبیاء) but not the final messenger (خاتم الرسل) and hence this does not terminate all components of messengerhood. However, this view is based on mere ignorance.

According to lexicographers, خَاتَمْ and خَاتِمْ have the same meaning. It can connote the last person of a community, the fate of a thing and the seal at the end of a letter.

Consider next the portion: وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا. The implication is that those who have created all this rumpus should know that God is more aware of all things than they. He knows both Zayd (rta) and Zaynab (rta) as well has His own Messenger. He is also fully aware of His Messenger's relationship with the two of them. None of this is

beyond His knowledge. Whatever happened was at His behest and permission. Hence, creating commotion against this is mere ignorance and foolishness. Trusting God's knowledge and wisdom is a requirement of faith. People should give due importance to the corrective measure undertaken. Only the all-embracing knowledge of God can understand the subtleties and wisdom of everything. Others cannot fully grasp all His wisdom.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿٤١﴾ وَّسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا ﴿٤٢﴾[41]

This verse emphasizes upon Muslims to resolutely stand against the opposition created by the Hypocrites and the mischief mongers. The methodology suggested for this is that while disregarding their rumpus they should engage more and more in remembering God and in extolling Him by night and by day. It should be kept in mind that the real shield through which believers have to counter the onslaught of Satan and his progeny is God's remembrance. For this very reason, wherever in the Qur'ān believers have been advised to show perseverance against their enemies, they have been specially directed to the prayer. The relationship between perseverance and the prayer has been delineated at several instances in this *tafsīr*.[42]

Consider the verse: وَّسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا. Here تسبیح symbolizes the prayer. It is in fact the mention of the specific after the general. Remembrance (ذکر) like breathing is needed all the time. However, God and His Messenger have prescribed certain times for the prayer. A comprehensive expression of this is بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا (by morning and by evening). In this timetable of morning and evening, the timings of the prayers have been prescribed. I have already alluded to this. Readers may look up the explanation of verse 78 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl and verse 130 of Sūrah Ṭāhā.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتُهٗ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا ﴿٤٣﴾[43]

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41. Believers! remember God in great abundance and extol him morning and evening.

42. See, for example, my explanation of verse 45 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

43. It is He Who sends His blessings on you and His angels too to bring you out from darkness into light and He is ever merciful to the believers.

These words state the blessings of remembering God in abundance: He sends down His mercy on His believers and His angels too continue to pray to God to grant His mercy to the believers.

The words لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ state the blessings of this mercy: He leads the believers to light from darkness. Here, darkness obviously refers to the darkness of beliefs and light refers to the light of guidance. The words وَ كَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا state the attribute of God that He is very merciful to the believers.

The word يُصَلِّيْ when used with reference to God will allude to His mercy and when used with reference to the angels will mean their prayer for mercy. Several examples of change in meaning with the change in the entity it is ascribed to occur in the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic literature. This word is used in two different meanings in this very *sūrah*: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَ مَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ؕ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿۵۶﴾ (Indeed, God sends His mercy to His Prophet and His angels also pray that mercy be granted to him; so, Believers! You too pray for him.)

The closing words وَ كَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَحِيْمًا of the verse under discussion also show that the word يُصَلِّيْ means that God will show His mercy to the Prophet (sws).

The fact that angels seek forgiveness for the believers is mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān as well. Thus, in Sūrah al-Mu'min, the words are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَ مَنْ حَوْلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَّ عِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَ اتَّبَعُوْا سَبِيْلَكَ وَ قِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ (۴۰:۷)

Those who bear the Throne and those who stand around it give glory to their Lord while celebrating His praises and believe in Him. And they implore forgiveness for those who have embraced faith, saying: "Lord, Your mercy and your knowledge embrace all things; so, forgive those who repent and follow Your path and shield them from the punishment of Hell." (40:7)

In Sūrah al-Shūrā, it is said:

وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ (٤٢: ٥)

And the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. (42:5)

تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿٤٤﴾[44]

The previous verse mentions the mercy and blessings of God which envelop a person in this world. This verse mentions the salutations which the believers will receive from God and His messengers in the Hereafter. It is said that when these people will meet their Lord in the Hereafter, they will be greeted with the salutation of *salām* and God would have prepared for them a very honourable recompense.

The word تَحِيَّةٌ is affixed to its object and its correct meaning is "greeting." It is also mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān that the dwellers of Paradise will receive *salām* (peace) from God and the angels too will greet them by these words.

In Sūrah al-Furqān, it is mentioned:

وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيْهَا تَحِيَّةً وَّ سَلٰمًا (٢٥: ٧٥)

And on that day, they will be welcomed with greetings and *salām*. (25:75).

In Sūrah Yāsīn, the words used are:

سَلٰمٌ ۣ قَوْلًا مِّنْ رَّبٍّ رَّحِيْمٍ (٣٦: ٥٨)

They shall be conveyed *salām* from the Merciful Lord. (36:58)

In Sūrah al-Zumar it is specified that the angels who would be keepers of Paradise shall welcome them with *salām*:

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْهَا خٰلِدِيْنَ (٣٩: ٧٣)

And the keepers of Paradise will say to them: "*salām*" be to you! Be happy; enter it forever. (39:73)

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44. On the day they meet Him their greeting shall be: "Peace!" and He has prepared for them a rich recompense.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ﴿۴۵﴾ وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿۴۶﴾[45]

This verse addresses the Prophet (sws) and informs him of his status and position, and also alludes to the responsibilities this position entails. The purpose is to make evident to the Prophet (sws) his assignments and the way to achieve them and at the same time make clear to others the real nature of his person so that both the opponents and the proponents can evaluate their attitudes in the light of this. The verse states that the Prophet (sws) has been sent as a شَاهِدً and مُبَشِّرً and نَذِيْرً. The word شَاهِدً means someone who bears witness to the directives of God and to the attitude that earns His pleasure. The real objective of a messenger is to tell people about things which God has enjoined and those which He has forbidden.

The expression مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا means that the Prophet (sws) should give glad tidings to people who accept his message and to warn people of the consequences of rejecting it. After these glad tidings and warnings, his responsibility of bearing witness stands fulfilled. It is not his responsibility whether people accept his message or reject it and if they accept it, did they accept it with hesitation. All these matters relate to God.

The words وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ are further explanation of what is just said: God has directed the Prophet (sws) to call people towards Him so that people leave aside Satan and his progeny and come towards God. The conditional word بِاِذْنِهٖ is to sound assurance to the Prophet (sws): since God Himself has appointed him to call people towards God, He will not leave the Prophet (sws) alone. In fact, He will help and guide him at every step. The implication is that Muḥammad (sws) is not a self-styled prophet so that God will leave him to wander about. It is God Who has made him a prophet and hence He will help him in discharging this obligation and in spite of the opposition of his enemies will make him succeed in his mission.

The words سِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا state that God has made the Prophet (sws) a shinning lamp which is lit up with the radiance of knowledge and

45. O Prophet! We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner and as one who shall call men to God by His permission and as a shining lamp.

wisdom and will also bring others out from darkness to the straight path of God. If people do not duly value him, they will not harm him in any way; they will, in fact, only hasten their own doom. They will go astray in this world and become the firewood of Hell in the Hereafter.

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾[46]

This verse explains the work of the Prophet (sws) as a bearer of glad tidings: he should give glad tidings to those who profess faith in his message that they should not become anxious at the opposition put up by their enemy nor be worried in adverse circumstances: a great blessing from God awaits them if they remain steadfast on their faith.

وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَدَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٤٨﴾[47]

This verse explains the work of the Prophet (sws) as a warner. However, instead of addressing those who were opposing the Prophet (sws) and asking them to do something, God has directly addressed him and told him what attitude he should adopt regarding them. Concealed in this attitude is the warning for the opposition that insinuates their fate. The verse asks him to pay no heed to what these disbelievers and Hypocrites say, ignore their mischief and trust God alone. God is sufficient to be trusted. The assurance found in this verse exudes from every word of it and the wrath found in it for his enemies is also fully evident from each word.

The word اِطَاعَةٌ in the expression وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ means to pay heed and give importance and regard. This is one of the common meanings of the word. I have already cited parallel verses at an appropriate instance in this *tafsīr* in which it is used in this meaning.

The word اَذٰى in وَ دَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ refers to harms inflicted and excesses committed by the Hypocrites in the matter of Zaynab (rta) and earlier in the matter of ‘Ā’ishah (rta). More of these excesses are mentioned later in this *sūrah*. The word دَعْ signifies leaving them by showing

46. And give glad tidings to the believers that there is a great blessing for them from God.

47. And do not pay heed to the disbelievers and the Hypocrites and ignore the harms they cause. And trust God and sufficient is God to trust.

disgust at their attitude.

In the words وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا a tremendous assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) and an even greater threat to his opponents. The Prophet (sws) should leave their matter to God, Who is sufficient to deal with them.

Finality of Prophethood

An explanation of all the essential teachings of the previous section of verses has been furnished below each verse earlier. However, certain aspects of the finality of prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) mentioned in verse 40 need further explanation. Briefly put, they are as follows:

1. The most important thing to be noted in this regard is that in the history of the prophets of God and the record of their sayings and teachings found in ancient scriptures and the Qur'ān or in books of history, neither has God informed us that any of the prophets from Adam (sws) to Jesus (rta) is the final prophet nor any of these prophets has claimed to be the final prophet. On the contrary, each prophet has prophesied about the next one after him. Angels had objections on the *khilāfah* of Adam (sws) and his progeny. It has been mentioned in the explanation of the relevant verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah that by enumerating the names of the prophets, Adam (sws) tried to allay the fears of the angels. The history of prophets before Abraham (sws) is not found anywhere. However, his own history and that of other prophets after him are mentioned both in the Torah and in the Qur'ān. The supplication made by Abraham (sws) regarding sending prophets in both branches of his descendents – the progeny of Isaac (sws) and the progeny of Ishmael (sws) – and the acceptance of this supplication by the Almighty are mentioned both in the Qur'ān and in the Torah and the Talmud. I have cited relevant references at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. After studying the details of the various prophets that came among the Israelites after Abraham (sws), it becomes evident that each prophet not only prophesied about the next one, but in many cases in accordance with the Israelite tradition even introduced him to people by baptism. The greatest of the Israelite prophets was Moses (sws). His predictions are mentioned in the Torah and the Qur'ān has also alluded to them.

He has also predicted about Muḥammad (sws), the seal of the prophets. It has already been cited under verse 157 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. John (sws) is one of the last prophets of the Israelites. He has stated that his mission was to clear the way for the prophet after him. He was actually referring to Jesus (sws). When Jesus (sws) began preaching John (sws) was in prison. From there he sent a message to Jesus (sws) asking him: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” (Matthew, 11:3). At this, Jesus (sws) replied: “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. (Matthew, 11:5).

After this answer, John (sws) was satisfied that his mission had been fulfilled. After John (sws), the last prophet and messenger among the Israelites was Jesus (sws). He predicted the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) and that too by his name. In Sūrah al-Ṣaff, this prediction is mentioned thus:

وَاِذْ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَمُبَشِّرًۢا بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِى اسْمُهٗٓ اَحْمَدُ (٦١: ٦)

And remember when Jesus son of Mary said: “O Israelites! I am sent forth to you as a Messenger of God in realization of the predictions which exist before me, and to give glad tidings of a messenger who will come after me. His name is Ahmad.” (61:6)

The predictions of Jesus (sws) regarding Muḥammad (sws) in the Gospels have been cited in this *tafsīr* while explaining verse 157 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. In the opinion of my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven given by Jesus (sws) in the Gospels and the parables he has mentioned in this regard all relate to the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) and its attributes.

In short, it has remained the practice of all prophets of God till Muḥammad (sws) that every prophet would give glad tidings of the prophet who was to follow him; however, on Muḥammad (sws) this practice completely ends. God has unequivocally called him the seal of the prophets and not only has Muḥammad (sws) not predicted the advent of any prophet after him; in fact, he very clearly and explicitly stated and proclaimed a number of times that he is the last prophet and no prophet will come after him. Every reasonable person can

understand that if there was even a slight possibility of a prophet coming after Muḥammad (sws), then in accordance with the tradition of all prophets, Muḥammad (sws) would have made a prediction in his favour. And if he made no such prediction, then at least he should not have so emphatically closed the doors of the institution of propehthood so that a person who tries to open it be regarded as a robber.

2. It would occupy much space if the various narratives ascribed to the Prophet (sws) in this regard are cited. I will only refer to a few such narratives which have become so famous as to reach the status of *tawātur*:

قال النبی صلی الله علیه و سلم اِنَّ مَثَلِی وَمَثَلَ الْاَنْبِیَاءِ من قَبْلِی کَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ بَنٰی بَیْتًا فَاَحْسَنَهُ وَاَجْمَلَهُ الا مَوْضِعَ لَبِنَةٍ من زَاوِیَةٍ فَجَعَلَ الناس یَطُوفُونَ بِهِ وَیَعْجَبُونَ له وَیَقُولُونَ هَلَّا وُضِعَتْ هذه اللَّبِنَةُ قال فَاَنَا اللَّبِنَةُ وانا خَاتِمُ النَّبِیِّینَ

The Prophet (sws) stated: "I and the prophets before me can be likened to a person who constructed a beautiful building but in a corner there was a gap for a brick. People would roam around this building and express their wonder on it and would ask: 'Why was this brick not placed at its place.' So I am that brick and I am the seal of the prophets."[48]

It needs to be kept in mind about the above narrative that Jesus (sws) has also prophesied the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) in almost the same words. He is reported to have said: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," (Matthew, 21:42). Various details of the way Jewish scholars have tried to conceal the predictions about the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) have already been referred to in the explanation of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In spite of all these efforts, the status the Almighty had ordained for Muḥammad (sws) was conferred on him at all cost. He became the last brick of the palace of the *sharī'ah* and also the final prophet and messenger of God.

The finality of prophethood is also the essential consequence of the completion of religion mentioned in the verse: اَلْیَوْمَ اَکْمَلْتُ لَکُمْ دِیْنَکُمْ (Today We have completed your religion for you, (5:3)). Had religion

48. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1300. (no. 3341).

belonged to the category of things which never needed completion, then the prophets and messengers were indeed needed continuously. However, once religion was brought to completion – and no one can deny this obvious fact – then as a necessary consequence of this it has to be accepted that the institution of prophethood and messengerhood ended. It is this reality which the Prophet (sws) has explained in the following narrative and in such a variety of ways that no reasonable person is left with any room for doubt:

قال رسول اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم اِنَّ الرِّسَالَةَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ قد انْقَطَعَتْ فلا رَسُولَ بَعْدِی ولا نَبِیَّ

The Prophet (sws) stated: "The [institutions of] messengerhood and prophethood have terminated after me. Neither a messenger nor a prophet will now come."[49]

In a narrative[50] in which the Prophet (sws) has recounted his six distinctions over the other prophets, the distinction that he has alluded to at the end is: خُتِمَ بِیَ النَّبِیُّونَ (the chain of prophethood has culminated on me).

Similarly, in another narrative[51] he has mentioned his various names. The last of these is عاقب and he himself has explained it as: الذی لیس بعدہ النبی (after whom no prophet will come).

3. It may be kept in mind that *nubuwwah* (prophethood) is not of various types. It only has one type which is the one mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth with all its requisites and attributes. However, there is a difference between a prophet and a messenger which has been alluded to above and which has been explained in detail at other places of this *tafsīr*. Certain deviant sects have tried to break into the sacred edifice of prophethood by citing many types of prophethood. They claim that the prophethood whose termination is mentioned in the Qur'ān is different from the prophethood they lay claim to. This classification of prophethood is self-styled on their part. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth do not mention them and not even vaguely allude to them. By making categories of prophethood, they have tried to lessen the disbelief they have committed; yet this effort for them has only

49. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 533, (no. 2722).
50. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 371, (no. 523).
51. Ibid., vol. 4, 1828, (no. 2354).

increased its intensity and filthiness. This is because this categorization has totally disrupted the structure of prophethood on whose foundation its edifice stands. It is not possible to fully deal with this issue here. However, readers may keep in mind this fact that the emphasis with which the Prophet (sws) has declared the termination of his propethood, with the same stress he has also clarified whether after him any component of prophethood will remain or not, and if it does then what its nature would be and who would receive a share from it.

It is narrated by Anas ibn Mālik (rta):

قال رسول اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم اِنَّ الرِّسَالَةَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ قد انْقَطَعَتْ فلا رَسُولَ بَعْدِی ولا نَبِیَّ قال فَشَقَّ ذلك على الناس فقال لَكِنْ الْمُبَشِّرَاتُ قالوا يا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ وما الْمُبَشِّرَاتُ قال رُؤْيَا الْمُسْلِمِ وَهِیَ جُزْءٌ من اَجْزَاءِ النُّبُوَّةِ

The Prophet (sws) stated: "The [institutions of] messengerhood and prophethood have been terminated after me. Neither a messenger nor a prophet will now come." [A narrator said:] This statement of the Prophet (sws) weighed heavily upon people; so the Prophet (sws) said: "*Mubashsharāt* do remain." People asked: "God's Messenger! What are the *mubashsharāt*?" He replied: "the dream of a Muslim and this is from among the components of prophthood."[52]

Some narratives explain the meaning of مُبَشِّرَاتُ as الرؤيا الحسنة (nice dream) and الرؤيا الصالحة (good dream).

The above cited narrative helps us in ascertaining certain facts.

Firstly, after Muḥammad (sws), the institution of divine revelation has been terminated. The only component left from the institution of prophethood is good dreams that a person sees. This Ḥadīth negates the claim of people to divine inspiration, divine experience and divine visions.

Secondly, good dreams can be seen by any Muslim or true believer. They are not specific to anyone. No one acquires any status of prophethood by seeing such dreams nor are these dreams a means of a conclusive directive or insinuation to a person. If a person has seen

52. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 533, (no. 2722).

a good dream it can be a type of good news and good omen for him. They have no status beyond this.

Thirdly, terms like *ẓillī nubuwwah* or *burūzī nubuwwah* (shadow prophethood) are totally satanic in nature. If they had any status, the Prophet (sws) at this instance in order to appease people would have said that they should not be anxious as after him shadow prophets will still come after him.

Fourthly, the arrangement made by God to protect the Qur'ān is a necessary consequence of termination of prophethood. No arrangement of the sort made to protect the Qur'ān was made with the scriptures and teachings of the prophets that came before Muḥammad (sws). This is because before him prophethood was in process. If people would forget or change the teachings of a prophet, the next prophet would revive the original teachings and also inform people of any additions made by God. However, since after the Prophet (sws), the institution of revelation was terminated and religion too reached its completion, it became necessary to protect and preserve the Qur'ān to such an extent that no man or jinn is able to cause any disruption in it till the Day of Judgement. Thus, it is a fact that the Almighty has preserved the Qur'ān in such a manner that no one can make the slightest alteration in it. The real divine barometer to judge good and evil is the Qur'ān. If it is preserved in its original form, no need remains of any divine revelation, inspiration or dialogue with God and since a prophet is needed for these very aspects hence now not even he is required. As for the obligations of *shahādah 'alā al-nās* (bearing witness to the truth before people) and reforming people, they rest with the *ummah* in its collective capacity. Scholars will be held accountable for this before God. It has been mentioned in Aḥādīth that scholars and reformers will continue to be born in this *ummah* who will try to reform the evils created by mischief-mongers even though they may be few in number.

Fifthly, it is evident from all these details that there is no possibility of any prophet appearing before the Day of Judgement. This inference is validated by the Qur'ān and Sunnah and human nature and intellect also vouch for it. If something in the narratives of the Prophet (sws) and his companions comes before our readers which is against these explicit directives, they must reflect on it. If the two can be reconciled on deliberation, then no issue remains. However, if no such reconciliation can be made, then preference must be given to the

Qur'ān and the established precepts of religion. I have tried to evaluate all historical narratives on this standard. In my opinion, all of them can be reconciled in the manner stated above. However, there is no room here to go into such details.

Section V: Verses (49-52)

Readers must fully grasp the background of this section of verses since because of its concise and terse nature our exegetes were faced with many complexities in deciphering it.

These verses are basically a supplement to verse 3 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in which the directive of polygamy is mentioned for common Muslims. After the revelation of this verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' Muslims who had more than four wives divorced the excess ones, yet it is not proven if the Prophet (sws) too did so. The reason is that till that time he had only four wives. Later, when he married Zaynab (rta), the Hypocrites objected to it by saying that he has his own *sharī'ah* than the rest of his followers. In order to shut the mouths of these Hypocrites, the Almighty has explained here the special permission granted to the Prophet (sws) with regard to his wives.

This permission has the following salient features:

1. The wives whose dowries have been paid by the Prophet (sws) are legally permissible to him without any exception.
2. If he wanted to marry slave-maidens received by him in a battle after liberating them, he could do so.
3. He could marry any woman among his close relatives who had migrated with him for the cause of religion after leaving their own relatives.
4. He could marry a believing woman who gifted herself to him.
5. Since all these marriages were conducted to benefit religion and the Muslim community, the restrictions imposed regarding marital rights on common Muslim were lifted from him.

With this freedom, two extra restrictions were imposed on the Prophet (sws) which common Muslims were not required to abide by:

1. He could not marry beyond the sphere specified above.
2. He could not divorce his wives.

This freedom and these restrictions are based on certain underlying reasons and benefits that must be understood:

All the marriages of the Prophet (sws) took place because of religious and political reasons as well as to sympathize, comfort and reassure certain women. Readers have studied under verse 34 that the noble wives of the Prophet (sws) were also given a share in the mission responsibility imposed on the Prophet. It was as if this was the real objective for which they had been chosen to marry him. History and Ḥadīth books bear ample testimony to the majestic and commendable way in which these noble wives fulfilled this responsibility. In this regard, of special mention are ‘Ā’ishah (rta), Umm Salamah (rta), Ḥafṣah (rta) and Maymūnah (rta). If they did not exceed men in this regard, they did not remain behind them as well. The teachings of the Prophet (sws) regarding women were spread through these wives in particular and could have spread only through them.

The circumstances in which the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab (rta) have already been described earlier. She chose to become a target of the jeers and taunts of her brother and other relatives merely to play her role in reforming a social evil, and respected the desire of the Prophet (sws) in this regard. The only way she could be aptly compensated for her sacrifices was that the Prophet (sws) marry her after she was divorced by Zayd (rta). Then like Zayd (rta), the Prophet’s marriage with her became a source of a great social reformation. In this regard, she also had to tolerate the nonsensical remarks of Hypocrite men and women. However, to earn the pleasure of God and His Prophet (sws) she bore all this.

Umm Ḥabībah (rta) had migrated to Abyssinia with her husband ‘Ubaydullāh. The reason for this migration was to seek respite from the persecution and oppression of the Quraysh. After some time there, her husband converted to Christianity. In that alien land, she chose to be separated from her husband and live alone in helplessness; however, she remained steadfast on her religion. The Prophet (sws) proposed to her in return for this perseverance and strength shown by her. Everyone can see that if ever this perseverance could be rewarded in this world, it could only have been if she becomes the wife of the Prophet (sws).

As regards the Prophet’s (sws) marriage with Jawayriyyah (rta) and Ṣafiyyah (rta) they were given to him as spoils of war from the battles of Banī Muṣtaliq and Khaybar respectively. Both of them were daughters of tribal chiefs. The Prophet (sws) did not deem it

appropriate to keep them as slave women given their noble lineage. He liberated them and then married them. The political wisdom behind these marriages is very evident.

Some women among the Companions only wanted to have the honour of being associated to the Prophet (sws). Among such women, this honour was bestowed on Maymūnah (rta). Her request was accepted by the Prophet (sws), and it is evident from various narratives that the person who played a key role in the acceptance of this request was ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet (sws).

A very similar case to Maymūnah (rta) was that of Sawdah (rta). Her details show that the only desire she had was to merely have an association with the Prophet (sws).

It is evident from these details that the matter of the Prophet (sws) regarding marriage and divorce was not the one that he should have the same restrictions as other Muslims. Had this been done, much expediency would have been sacrificed. For this reason, the Almighty revealed a special law for him. This law had the capacity in it to cater for the religious expediencies referred to earlier, and at the same time had certain restrictions which were not imposed on common Muslims. It is evident from this that the latitude given to the Prophet (sws) was entirely based on certain underlying reasons. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in this background.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ
تَعْتَدُّوْنَهَا ۚ فَمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ وَسَرِّحُوْهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ
اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ
خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِيْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ ۡ وَامْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا ۗ
خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۭ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا
يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٥٠﴾ تُرْجِيْ مَنْ تَشَاۗءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُــــْٔوِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَاۗءُ ۭ وَمَنِ
ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ
كُلُّهُنَّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا ﴿٥١﴾ لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاۗءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَلَآ اَنْ
تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا ﴿٥٢﴾

Believers! When you marry believing women and divorce them before consummating the marriage, you are not required to observe the waiting period. Thus give them well and let them go honourably. (49)

O Prophet! We have made lawful to you the wives whose dowers have been paid by you and free women whom God gives in your possession from the spoils of war and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts who migrated with you and any believing woman who gifts herself to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to marry her. This directive is specifically for you alone, separate from the believers. We very well know what We have imposed on them as obligations regarding their wives and slave girls so that there be no difficulty for you and God is Forgiving and Merciful. You can keep any of them away from you and keep any of them near you and it is allowed to you to bring any of them near you whom you have kept away. This is more proper so that they be contented and not be sorrowful – and feel satisfied with whatever you give all of them. And God knows what is in your hearts and God is All-Knowing and Most-Forbearing. All other women besides these are not lawful for you nor is it lawful to you to change them for other wives, even though their beauty may enchant you. Slave-girls, however are allowed to you. And God does watch over all things. (50-52)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُّوْنَهَا ۚ فَمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ وَسَرِّحُوْهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا ﴿٤٩﴾[53]

It will become evident from verse 50 that the explanation mentioned in this verse constitutes supplementary directives given to Muslims in Sūrah al-Nisā' to limit their wives. Before the actual supplementary directive, this verse 49 is an introductory verse in which a question is answered. It is stated that if a wife is divorced before the marriage is consummated, then she is not required to undergo the *'iddat* period. This question must have specially arisen

53. Believers! When you marry believing women and divorce them before consummating the marriage, you are not required to observe the waiting period. Thus give them well and let them go honourably.

in those times because while following the directive of limiting the wives to four, many cases of divorce must have taken place, and men must have thought that they should preferably divorce those of their wives with whom marriage had not been consummated as yet. This verse provided a very just option in this matter: such people were told that no *'iddat* period was needed for such women. They should be honourably released by giving them provisions of life. Details of such grant of provisions can be seen in verses 236-237 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The meaning of سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا was explained by this writer under these verses. I had written that if the stage of divorce reaches, then it should be done in a very graceful and magnanimous way. It should not be a source of humiliation for the parties involved.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ وَ
بَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِيْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ ۡ وَامْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ
نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا ۗ خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا
عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْٓ اَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۵۰﴾[54]

It has been referred to earlier that when the directive of limiting the wives to four was revealed, the Prophet (sws) had only four wives: 'Ā'ishah (rta), Ḥafṣah (rta), Sawdah (rta) and Umm Salamah (rta). It may be noted that Zaynab bint Khuzaymah (rta) had already died in 4 AH. Hence, the question of the Prophet (sws) divorcing any of his wives never arose. And hence the Hypocrites in this matter could not raise any objection. However, in 5 AH when the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta), it seems the Hypocrites got the chance of raising two points in their propaganda campaign against

54. O Prophet! We have made lawful to you the wives whose dowers have been paid by you and free women whom God gives in your possession from the spoils of war and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts who migrated with you and any believing woman who gifts herself to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to marry her. This directive is specifically for you alone, separate from the believers. We very well know what We have imposed on them as obligations regarding their wives and slave girls so that there be no difficulty for you and God is Forgiving and Merciful.

the Prophet (sws): they contended that the Prophet (sws) had married the wife of his adopted son and had also made a separate *sharī'ah* for his own self as all Muslims were allowed to marry up to four wives whilst there was no such restriction on him in this regard.

The details of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) have been furnished earlier. It is evident from them that the Prophet (sws) as the per the Qur'ān (33:37-38) did not desire this marriage at all; it was at God's directive that he married her. However, how could the mischief mongers accept this. Hence, they must have raised this objection. At last, the Almighty took it upon Himself to explain in detail that the Prophet (sws) had been given certain exceptions in the law of polygamy applicable to common Muslims.

The words يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ first of all relate to those wives who at the time of revelation of this verse were in his wedlock. These words state that the Almighty has made lawful for the Prophet (sws) wives whose dowers have been paid by him. Here "to make lawful" does not mean that at one time they were prohibited in some aspect and then this prohibition was lifted. This statement has in fact been given to shut the mouths of the Hypocrites and those who were raising objections: he should not care about their worthless talk. Concomitant indicators show that these verses were revealed in 5 AH. Since the start of the Makkan life till 5 AH, two of his wives Khadījah (rta) and Zaynabt bint Khuzaymah (rta) had already died, as indicated earlier. 'Ā'ishah (rta), Ḥafṣah (rta), Sawdah (rta) and Umm Salamah (rta), however, were alive. And to this group the new addition of Zaynab bint Jaḥash (rta) was made. About all these, the verse states that they have been made lawful to the Prophet (sws). These women have been introduced by the words اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ (whose dowers you have paid) because after them are mentioned those women who were granted to him through spoils of war and it is known for such women dowers are not needed to be paid.

The words وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ refer to the fact that women who have been acquired by the Prophet (sws) as slaves from spoils of war are also lawful to him. Here the words مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ after وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ must be specially kept in consideration. It is evident from them that common slave women are not implied by them. They refer to women who are acquired through spoils of war. Among these imprisoned women, there, at times, would be women of nobility and daughters

and daughters-in-law of tribal chiefs. Treating them with special favour was a tradition that was even found in the days of *jāhiliyyah*. Islam also kept it intact. Thus such women were generally distributed among chiefs of the capturing army. Jawayriyyah (rta) and Ṣafiyyah (rta) as per this tradition were given to the Prophet (sws) in the battles of Banī Muṣtaliq and Khaybar respectively. He could have kept them as slaves but giving due consideration to their family status he liberated and then married them. This marriage was conducted under the special condition granted by the verse under discussion. If this permission had not been granted to him, he could have kept both these women as slaves but could not have married them because in this case the number of wives would have exceeded the stipulated number. This of course would have cause difficulty for him in giving due regard to certain political and moral benefits. For this reason, the Almighty gave him permission to marry such women. These marriages took place in 5 AH and 7 AH respectively. Hence by 7 AH the number of his wives reached 7.

The words وَبَنٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنٰتِ عَمّٰتِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنٰتِ خٰلٰتِكَ الّٰتِيْ هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ detail out very close relatives of the Prophet (sws): if any of his paternal or maternal cousins left their relatives, family and tribe for the cause of religion and migrated with him, and to give due regard and encouragement to them on this, he could marry any of them if he wanted to. God's directive to the Prophet (sws) to marry Zaynab (rta) not only was to reform a custom of the *jāhiliyyah* period but it was also because she deserved his affection and love because being his cousin she had made sacrifices for the cause of religion.

It was on the basis of this very permission that the Prophet (sws) married Umm Ḥabībah bint Abī Sufyān (rta). She was his paternal cousin. The details of her sacrifices for the cause of religion have already been cited earlier.

No marriage was conducted by the Prophet (sws) with any of his maternal cousins. However, if there had been women like Zaynab (rta) and Umm Ḥabībah (rta) among them, if needed he could have married them as per this permission.

Consider next the words: وَ امْرَاَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً اِنْ وَّهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ اِنْ اَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ اَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِحَهَا. Gifting one's self to someone means that a lady forgo all her rights and consign herself to a person and feel satisfied on whatever marital rights that person gives her. This is a form of extreme sacrifice

and selflessness. It is evident from historical narratives that many women from among his companions wanted to do this merely to have the honour of being ascribed to him, and they even expressed this desire before them. Everyone knows that the personal life of the Prophet (sws) was very constrained financially. It has been described above that it was because of such financial scarcity that Hypocrite women would suggest to them that if they are able to get divorce from the Prophet (sws), prominent chiefs of the time would marry them and this life of abject poverty would be turned into a life of luxury and comfort. In the wake of this, obviously no woman could have gifted herself to the Prophet (sws) for any worldly greed. Such a sacrifice could have been made only by those women who held the Prophet (sws) in high regard and esteem and merely wanted to have the honour of serving him thereby forgoing every desire they may have. This was a very noble and pure sentiment. For this reason, the Almighty gave it due consideration and allowed the Prophet (sws) that if a believing woman wanted to gift herself to him and he too agreed, then he could marry such a lady. It is evident from the condition imposed by the words اِنۡ اَرَادَ النَّبِیُّ اَنۡ یَّسۡتَنۡکِحَهَا that although these are very commendable sentiments, the Prophet (sws) is not in a position to greatly encourage it. Hence, it has been left totally at his discretion to accept or reject such a proposal. It has already been pointed out earlier that the only proposal he accepted in this regard was that of Maymūnah (rta). This marriage took place in 7 AH at the 'Umrah al-qaḍā'. After this, the Prophet (sws) did not marry any further.

The words خَالِصَةً لَّکَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ refer to the fact that this permission to marry more than four wives is specially for the Prophet (sws); other Muslims do not have this permission.

The words قَدۡ عَلِمۡنَا مَا فَرَضۡنَا عَلَیۡهِمۡ فِیۡۤ اَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَ مَا مَلَکَتۡ اَیۡمَانُهُمۡ لِکَیۡلَا یَکُوۡنَ عَلَیۡکَ حَرَجٌ refer to verse 3 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in which it was made mandatory on the Muslims to not marry more than four women. These words mean that it is in God's knowledge what He had made incumbent on the Muslims regarding their wives and slave-maidens. In spite of this, He is giving the Prophet (sws) this special permission so that he is not faced with any difficulty in this regard. In other words, he would be able to fulfill this permission to marry for religious and collective benefits referred to above without any hindrance.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): though this permission has imposed some heavy obligations on him, God is forgiving and merciful. He forgoes blemishes which take place unintentionally.

Regarding this verse, some people on the basis of certain narratives have expressed the view that it was revealed after all the marriages of the Prophet (sws), and through it he was assured that all the marriages he had undertaken were lawful. In the opinion of this writer, this view is not correct.

Firstly, how could have the Prophet (sws) married without God's permission once the directive to limit marriage to four had been revealed? It was but befitting for him to take the lead in following this directive.

Secondly, if it just needed to be said that all marriages conducted by him were lawful, then what was the need to state all these relations and types of women made lawful to him? A single sentence to the effect that all his marriages have been made lawful by God would have been enough, and no one has the right to object to them.

Nevertheless, this view is untenable. The real situation is the one which I have alluded to above. When the verse limiting marriages to four was revealed, the Prophet (sws) had only four wives. So no question of divorcing any of them arose. Later, however, when he married Zaynab (rta), this would have raised an objection in the minds of the critics, and there was a chance that the pious too may get affected with this objection. In order to circumvent this possibility, the Almighty explained in detail that it was at His own behest that this marriage had taken place, and that in this matter the law for the Prophet (sws) was different from the rest of the Muslims. The Prophet (sws) could marry further in a certain specified category of women. In this manner, God declared the lawful nature of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (rta) and also prescribed detailed regulations in this regard. In short, in this writer's opinion, this verse was revealed in 5 AH after the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (rta).

تُرْجِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُـْٔوِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ؕ وَمَنِ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ

عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا ﴿٥١﴾[55]

It has been explained earlier that all these marriages of the Prophet (sws) were conducted to achieve certain objectives in the interest of religion. For this reason, just as an exception was given to him in the number of wives, he was also given freedom in marital rights. It was thus left to his discretion which of the wives he would like to keep close to him and which not. Though the matter of justice between the wives was very significant, the Almighty gave the Prophet (sws) freedom in this matter as well, and this had two aspects:

Firstly, as alluded to earlier, in his case the real purpose for which marriages are contracted was secondary. The real purpose was to achieve certain interests of religion, and for this he was relieved of the bounds and limits that have been prescribed for a common husband and wife.

Secondly, there was no fear in his case that he would gain unwarranted benefit from this permission. Thus all biographers of the Prophet (sws) unanimously state that in spite of this freedom he continued to impose on himself the condition of justice and never ever disregarded it.

The words وَمَنِ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ refer to the fact that he had the permission to restore marital and intimate relations with a wife after severing them. In this matter, he had no restriction on him and no one among his wives would have the right to object to this.

The words ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ تَقَرَّ اَعْيُنُهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ urge the noble wives to not regard their relationship with the Prophet (sws) to be analogous to a general husband and wife relationship. They should judge it by the real responsibility of the Prophet (sws) and their own real status. If this correct basis of the Prophet's marriages is kept in mind by them and they think that their real relationship with the Prophet (sws) is not of husband and wife but of women who want to serve the cause of religion, then neither will any mutual jealousy viz a viz their marital rights will remain between them nor will they have

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55. You can keep any of them away from you and keep any of them near you and it is also allowed to you to bring any of them near you whom you have kept away. This is more proper so that they be contented and not be sorrowful – and feel satisfied with whatever you give all of them. And God knows what is in your hearts and God is All-Knowing and Most-Forbearing.

any complaint or grievance with the Prophet (sws). With this view in mind, they will feel content with whatever time he can make available for them. With this change of view, the more a wife will serve religion the more elevated status she will have not only in the eyes of the Prophet (sws) but also in the eyes of his other wives. This will eliminate the sting between mutual jealousies and envies.

The words وَ اللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَلِيْمًا remind the Prophet (sws) and his wives that everyone should fully bear in mind that God is aware of all the secrets of the hearts, and in spite of this knowledge, He is forbearing and tolerant. Hence, He forgoes blemishes. By fully keeping in mind both the knowledge and forbearance of God, the true concept of His fear and forgiveness is formed in the minds. This concept creates a balance between hope and despair in a person and sets his life on the right path.

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَآءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَ لَاۤ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّ لَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا ﴿۵۲﴾[56]

Apart from the categories of women mentioned above, all other types of women were forbidden to the Prophet (sws). Ibn Kathīr has cited the following opinion of *tafsīr* authorities like Ubayy ibn Ka‘b (rta), Mujāhid, ‘Ikramah, Dhahhāk, Abū Razīn, Abū Ṣāliḥ, Ḥasan, Qatādah and Suddī: وما سوى ذلك من أصناف النساء فلا يحل لك (and except for these all other categories of women are not lawful to you).[57] In other words, a special sphere of women has been specified for the Prophet (sws) beyond which he could not marry.

The words وَ لَاۤ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّ لَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ state that the Prophet (sws) was not even permitted to divorce any of his wives and marry new ones in their place even though their beauty might attract him. After this, only slave-maidens were left. Thus under this permission Māriyah, the Copt came in his possession and it was from her that the Prophet (sws) had a son: Abraham.

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56. All other women besides these are not lawful for you nor is it lawful to you to change them for other wives, even though their beauty may enchant you. Slave-girls, however are allowed to you. And God does watch over all things.

57. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 503.

It is obvious that the words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيْبًا carry a reminder and admonition and it is also obvious that their addressee is the Prophet (sws). Readers may have noticed that a similar reminder was sounded to the noble wives in the previous verse. It is evident from this that everyone is accountable before God and the higher status he has the greater is his accountability. For this reason, it is essential for everyone to continue to hold himself or herself accountable before God's accountability. Such should be the rigorous nature of this accountability that it should be fully borne in mind that every sphere of one's life is in God's knowledge.

If one reflects on the freedom and restrictions imposed on the Prophet (sws) mentioned in the afore-mentioned verses, one can see that though he has been given the freedom to marry more than four wives the restrictions that have been imposed on him viz a viz marriage and divorce are much more than the ones imposed on common Muslims.

A common Muslim is permitted to marry up to four among non-*maḥram* women and divorce any of them and bring a new wife in her place. However, the Prophet (sws) did not have this freedom. After the revelation of this directive, he could marry among only three categories of women:

i. closely-related women who had migrated with him.

ii. women who were acquired in war booty.

iii. women who wanted to gift themselves to the Prophet (sws) and he too accepted this arrangement.

The Prophet (sws) could neither marry beyond these categories nor change any of his wives merely on the basis of like or dislike. This permission was given to him to achieve certain interests of religion, as explained earlier.

Section VI: Verses (53-62)

In the succeeding verses, to counter the conspiracies and harms of the Hypocrites, certain directives are given to the noble wives as well as to common Muslim women regarding their dress code (*pardah*). Some other directives have already been given in Sūrah al-Nūr. These directives have been brought to a completion here so that the mischief-mongers and miscreants are left with no space to create desist from their pranks, then such directives will be issued regarding them that it

will not even be possible for them to hide themselves in the land. Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ
فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيٖ مِنْكُمْ وَ
اللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَ
قُلُوْبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
عَظِيْمًا ﴿٥٣﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا شَيْـًٔا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ
اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَآئِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ وَ
اتَّقِيْنَ اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٥٥﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَ
اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوْا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوْا بُهْتَانًا وَّ
اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٥٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ
ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٥٩﴾ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ
مَّرَضٌ وَّالْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُوْنَكَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٦٠﴾ مَّلْعُوْنِيْنَ اَيْنَمَا
ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا ﴿٦١﴾ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾

Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are given permission to come for a meal – without waiting for the preparation of the meal. But when you are called, enter; and when you have eaten, disperse and do not sit and chat about. These things were a cause of disturbance for the Prophet but he would be considerate to you; And God is not considerate to anyone in expressing the truth. And if you ask his wives for anything, ask them from behind a curtain. This way is more chaste for your hearts and their hearts. And it is not lawful to you that you torment God's Messenger nor is it lawful to you that you ever wed his wives after him; These are all grave things in the sight of God. Whether you reveal anything or conceal it, God is aware of everything. (53-54)

It shall be no offence for the Prophet's wives regarding their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters'

sons, their women of acquaintance, or their slave-girls. Women! Have fear of God. God is aware of everything. (55)

Indeed, God and His angels send their mercy to the Prophet. Believers! You too send your blessings to him. Indeed those who torment God and His Messenger are cursed by God in this life and that to come, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment. And those who torment believing men and believing women for what they never did shall bear the guilt of slander and a grievous sin. (58)

O Prophet! Ask your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks over them. This is more close to the fact that they may be recognized and not be molested. And God is Ever-Forgiving and Merciful. (59)

If these Hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts and the scandal mongers of Madīnah do not desist, We will incite you against them. Then they will seldom get a chance to live with you. Cursed shall they be. Wherever they are seized, they shall be slain mercilessly. Such has been the practice of God about those who have gone before them. And you shall find no change in the practice of God. (60-62)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيٖ مِنْكُمْ ۫ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمًا ﴿۵۳﴾[58]

58. Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are given permission to come for a meal – without waiting for the preparation of the meal. But when you are called, enter; and when you have eaten, disperse and do not sit and chat about. These things were a cause of disturbance for the Prophet but he would be considerate to you; And God is not considerate to anyone in expressing the truth. And if you ask his wives for anything, ask them from behind a curtain. This way is more chaste for your hearts and their hearts. And it is not lawful to you that you torment God's Messenger nor is it lawful to you that you ever wed his wives after him; These are all grave things in the sight of God.

The necessary etiquette that Muslims must follow when they visit one another has already been mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr. Here, this etiquette is explained with reference to the houses of the Prophet (sws), and this further explanation was the consequence of the attitude of the Hypocrites which is discussed in this *sūrah*.

Due to various reasons, the Prophet (sws) from time to time would invite his companions for food. Because of his gracious nature and civility, on such occasions he would even invite people who were afflicted with the ailment of hypocrisy. Some would join such banquets even without invitation. Such people would exploit the gracious manners of the Prophet (sws). In the first place, these people feigning that they have been invited, would come much before time and sit there for long periods. Then even after having food they would not budge and would engage in long conversations. A further prank they would indulge in would be that they would suddenly barge into the abodes of the noble wives on the excuse that they wanted something from them. The purpose of all these activities would be what I have already alluded to earlier: they wanted an opening to instill evil suggestions into their hearts. The Prophet (sws) would not like these activities and would also feel uncomfortable. However, out of courtesy, he would overlook them. Yet there is a limit to overlooking something. When it became evident that these people did not deserve courtesy, the Almighty revealed very explicit directives and also warned that if they now do not change their ways, they will be calling for the fate destined for them.

Though the address in يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ is general so that the teachings these words carry are deemed to be for all, yet concealed in this address are the Hypocrites to which we have alluded earlier. On this occasion, the Almighty too did not want to lift the veil from them and used general words of address. The words mean: “Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are given permission to come for a meal.” There are two things concealed in the style: يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ : firstly, people should not enter without permission, and secondly, they should not come to a banquet without being invited. The words غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ state the third condition. The words نٰظِرِيْنَ and اِنٰى mean “those who wait” and “the time needed to prepare something or to cook food” respectively. In other words, it is also not allowed to them that

if somehow they have managed to come for the banquet, then they should come before time and wait for the time for it to be served. In the first place, this shows that a person is greedy and mean, and in the second, in those times, houses did not have the facility to have separate sections for men and women; same was the case with the Prophet's house. Hence, it would be very bothersome for the house inhabitants if people would come before time.

The words وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ state the right decorum in this regard: people should come only when they are called and once they have had food they should disperse and should not sit there chatting about. The words اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ explain what is implicitly found in the words يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ. In other words, they should only go when they are called and never go uninvited. The directive وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ is very similar to the one given in غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ اِنٰىهُ. So, just as this is undesirable that people should go there and wait while the food is being cooked, it is equally undesirable to stay back and engage in conversation once they have eaten the food.

The pronoun ذٰلِكُمْ in اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِى النَّبِىَّ فَيَسْتَحْىٖ مِنْكُمْ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْىٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ points to all the things mentioned earlier. It is said that all these things were a cause of bother and discomfort for the Prophet (sws), but he did not stop them because he was courteous and considerate to them. However, God does not show courtesy and consideration in the matter of the truth. Hence, He is now informing them. It may be noted here that God has not mentioned here any weakness of the Prophet (sws). He has in fact mentioned a very desirable trait of his: he is very courteous and polite. For this reason, the Almighty warned people of their blemishes and it became essential for the Prophet (sws) also to declare them by disregarding any more courtesy.

The antecedent of the pronoun in وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ is the wives of the Prophet (sws). The expression بُيُوْتَ النَّبِىِّ (houses of the Prophet) has already occurred earlier. Hence a very clear indication of the wives can be gauged from the context. These words mean that if a person needs something he should not barge into the presence of the Prophet's wives. He should ask for his need from behind a curtain.

The words are ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ (this way is more chaste for your hearts and their hearts.) are meant to negate a notion that may arise in the minds. The implication is that apparently it seems a much

unneeded thing that if a person wants to ask for a glass of water from them, then even for such a trivial task he must ask them from behind a curtain. However, it should not be regarded as a triviality; it is something very important to protect the heart. The Almighty is fully aware of the person whose heart He has made. He knows the hidden pathways from where it accepts negative influences, and it is the heart on which depends the moral health of a person. It is thus essential for people who want to keep their heart healthy to protect it from things that can contaminate it. People of today who claim to be cultured and well-mannered show a lot of diligence in keeping their clothes clean; they would not like the slightest speck of dust settle on them or the smallest of wrinkles that may make them untidy. However, they not the slightest care about the filth with which their hearts may be contaminanted with. This is because moral and spiritual health has no importance before them. The fact is that it is this health which occupies real significance. The Prophet (sws) has directed our attention to this fact by the words: وَاِنَّ فِی الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً اِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ کُلُّهُ وَاِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ کُلُّهُ اَلَا وَهِیَ الْقَلْبُ (There is a chunk of meat in a person's body; if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy; if it is inflicted with some disorder, the whole body is inflicted with disorder. Listen up! [This chunk of meat] is the heart).[59] The more delicate and valuable an organ in a body is, the more it needs to be looked after. The heart is the most valuable and the most sensitive organ in a human body. For this reason, the Almighty has made the most arrangements to protect it.

The words: وَمَا کَانَ لَکُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوْا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْکِحُوْٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا state that it is not worthy of people to torment God and the Prophet (sws) with things mentioned earlier nor is it lawful to them to marry any of the Prophet's wives.

This part of the verse has finally lifted the veil from the face of the people who were actually being addressed. Obviously, it was the Hypocrites who would indulge in such mischief to torment the Prophet (sws), and it was they who fancied marrying his wives so that this could become a means to further create mischief and propaganda against God and His Messenger. The style of this verse harbours admonition in it. That is why Muḥammad (sws) is

59. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1219, (no. 1599).

mentioned as رسول اللّٰہِ God's Messenger where as in the previous verses he was repeatedly addressed as a نبی (Prophet). The purpose is to emphasize the admonition. This is because a Messenger sets up God's court of justice in this very world, as has been repeatedly referred to in this *tafsīr*. When he comes, he does not merely preach and propagate his message: he comes to decide the fate of the pious and the wicked of his nation. Hence, making fun of him or tormenting him must not be taken lightly. The implication is that those who are playing this game are actually playing with fire. They must keep this fate of theirs in their minds.

The words: وَلَآ اَنۡ تَنۡكِحُوۡٓا اَزۡوَاجَهٗ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖۤ اَبَدًا strike a final blow on the desire of marrying the wives of the Prophet (sws) which these people harboured in their hearts. It is stated that it is not lawful for them to marry his wives today or any time later. It has already been mentioned in verse 6 earlier that the wives of the Prophet (sws) are like mothers of the believers. It is only this relationship which is natural and logical for them. It is natural because every believer (if he has any semblance of faith in him) regards them with much more respect and honour than even his own mother. In the light of this if a believer even thinks of marrying them, it is worse and more shameful than thinking of marrying his own mother. If he even thinks of marrying them, then it means that his faith has serious shortcomings and his nature has become perverted.

It is logical because the status of the wives of the Prophet (sws) as has been mentioned earlier in verse 34 is that they are the teachers of every man and woman of this *ummah*, and the Almighty Himself has accorded this status to them. It is the consequence of this status that they be regarded as mothers. It is only by remaining in this position that they can discharge this responsibility imposed on them by God. If they are divested of this status, then neither can they maintain their true dignity nor can others learn from them the way they should learn from them as teachers of this *ummah*.

The words اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمۡ كَانَ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيۡمًا express a severe admonition. They state that all these things are very grave in the sight of God. Here their grievous consequence is not described. The threat which is concealed in this ambiguity does not need any words for expression.

اِنۡ تُبۡدُوۡا شَيۡـئًا اَوۡ تُخۡفُوۡهُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمًا ﴿۵۴﴾[60]

This verse expresses another threat which adds emphasis to the earlier one. The implication is that since God is also aware of the secrets of the hearts, nothing can be hidden from Him. They can present beautiful excuses for the most evil deeds they do in this world, but these excuses will have no weight before the Almighty. He will reveal all the evil intentions of the hearts as well.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡهِنَّ فِىۡۤ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اَبۡنَآئِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اِخۡوَانِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اَبۡنَآءِ اِخۡوَانِهِنَّ وَلَاۤ اَبۡنَآءِ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَآئِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُهُنَّ‌ۚ وَاتَّقِيۡنَ اللّٰهَ‌ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدًا ﴿۵۵﴾[61]

This verse has the same occasion as that of وَلَا يُبۡدِيۡنَ زِيۡنَتَهُنَّ in Sūrah al-Nūr. Most words of these two verses are common as well. This verse enumerates the list of people who were an exception to the restrictions which had been imposed in the earlier verse regarding people entering the houses of the Prophet's wives. Special and important relationships are mentioned and the purpose is that all people subsumed under them are an exception to this restriction. The only restrictions they must abide by are the ones mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr.

The words وَاتَّقِيۡنَ اللّٰهَ‌ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدًا in the end warn the wives of the Prophet (sws) the way others have been warned earlier. The implication is that these directives must not be followed in a minimal fashion. They must be followed in letter and spirit with piety and fear of God. And it must always be kept in mind that God is present everywhere. There is no place where a person can hide from Him.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوۡنَ عَلَى النَّبِىِّ‌ؕ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا صَلُّوۡا عَلَيۡهِ وَسَلِّمُوۡا تَسۡلِيۡمًا ﴿۵۶﴾[62]

This verse directs Muslims to adopt the behavior they must adopt

60. Whether you reveal anything or conceal it, God is aware of everything.

61. It shall be no offence for the Prophet's wives regarding their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women of acquaintance, or their slave-girls. Women! Have fear of God. God is aware of everything.

62. Indeed, God and His angels sending their mercy to the Prophet. Believers! You too send your blessings to him.

instead of tormenting and harassing the Prophet (sws). It is stated that God sends mercy to his Prophet (sws) and his angels also pray for mercy for him. Thus the correct behaviour in this regard for the believers is that they also in unison with the angels send blessings and salutations to the Prophet instead of scheming to torment him.

A number of facts which become evident from this verse should remain in consideration.

Firstly, it is a pity if some people among human beings try to torment the Prophet (sws) whose status before God and His angels is such that God sends His mercies to him and the angels pray for mercy for him. The fact is that the real favour of the Prophet (sws) is with human beings and not God and His angels.

Secondly, those who send blessings and salutations to the Prophet (sws) are not doing a favour to him. They are merely adding their voice to the voice of the angels and thereby becoming eligible of mercy. As far as the Prophet (sws) himself is concerned, he does not need the supplications and prayers of others in the presence of the mercy of God and the supplications and prayers of the angels.

Thirdly, sending mercies and blessings to the Prophet (sws) is a remedy for the ailment of hypocrisy. The reason is that here the occasion on which this statement has been given is that instead of tormenting the Prophet (sws) like the Hypocrites, the believers should send blessings to the Prophet (sws). It is clearly evident from this that hypocrisy does not enter the hearts of those who are diligent in sending blessings to the Prophet (sws).

Fourthly, the objective is that abundant blessings be sent to the Prophet (sws). The occasion and context as well as the words of the verse necessitate this. This is because the verbal noun in وَسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا denotes emphasis and multiplicity. For this reason, I do not regard the opinion of those jurists as correct who say that if a person only sends blessings to the Prophet (sws) once in his life, then he would have followed the purport of this verse.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿۵۷﴾[63]

63. Indeed those who torment God and His Messenger are cursed by God in this life and that to come, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment.

This verse mentions the fate of the people who were guilty of tormenting God's Messenger and showing disrespect to him. It is stated that tormenting the Prophet (sws) is like tormenting God. A messenger is someone dear to God and is His envoy. God and His angels send their mercy and blessings to him; those who do not so will necessarily be considered as those who oppose God and His angels and torment them. God's curse will be on them in this world and the next as a punishment of this behaviour. They shall be humiliated and disgraced in this world and in the Hereafter too a grievous penalty awaits them. It may specially be noted here that they have been threatened of a worldly punishment before they face the next-worldly punishment. This is a reference to the established practice of God regarding His messengers which has been stated earlier. Further ahead, verses 60-61 also explain it. It is exactly the same punishment which was given to the Jews, and their crime was also that they tried to torment and harm the messengers of God. A further explanation of this can be seen in the explanation of Sūrah al-Ṣaff.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوْا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوْا بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۵۸﴾[64]

The previous verses mention the attitude the Hypocrites had specifically adopted towards the Prophet (sws). This verse now alludes to their pranks and mischief they were working against believing men and women to make them blameworthy. I have dealt with in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Nūr that what weighed down heavily on the Hypocrites was that amongst all other religious denominations, Muslims were regarded as morally superior – a factor that was largely responsible for their wide-scale recognition. Out of frenzied jealousy, the antidote they invented for this was to defame believing men and women so that they are brought in moral disrepute. This evil-doing would satisfy their venom. The details of the incident of *ifk* have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr. That mischief too was worked keeping this objective in mind. Here the Almighty has referred to this evil-doing and stated that those who are implicating believing men and women through false blames are

64. And those who torment believing men and believing women for what they never did shall bear the guilt of slander and a grievous sin.

guilty of absolute slander and open sin. The implication is that if they do not desist from this attitude of theirs, they will face its consequences.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ وَ بَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۵۹﴾[65]

To secure the wives of the Prophet (sws) and Muslim women from the evil-doing of these Hypocrites and mischief mongers, they have been directed to pull over a part of their cloaks on their faces. This would create a distinction between them and non-Muslim women and slave-maidens and no one would be afforded with an excuse to tease them.

Readers my remember that in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Nūr it was directed that when relatives pay a visit, women of the house should put on a modest behaviour and not display their embellishments and should draw their coverings over their bosoms: وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوْبِهِنَّ (٢٤: ٣١). Here they are directed to draw large cloaks over themselves that drops over their faces. This is an obvious indication of the fact that this directive relates to the situation when women need to go out of their houses. One of the reasons that makes it an indication for this inference is that the reason for this directive is: ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ (this is more close to the fact that they may be recognized and not be molested). Obviously this can only be related to outside-the-house situations. The second reason for this is that the word جلباب (*jilbāb*) is used and not خمار (*khimār*). The word جلباب is explained by lexicographers thus: هو الرداء فوق الخمار (*jilbāb* refers to the large cloak that it worn over the *khimār*). Obviously, the need to wear large cloaks cannot arise inside the homes. The nobility among Arab women would wear them when they would go out of their houses. It is evident from classical Arabic poetry that *jilbāb* was commonly worn by Arab women belonging to the nobility when they would go out of their houses. The following couplet of a poetess belonging to

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65. O Prophet! Ask your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks over them. This is more close to the fact that they may be recognized and not be molested. And God is Ever-Forgiving and Merciful.

the tribe of Hudhayl is sufficient to prove our claim. In a elegy of one the slain people of her tribe, she writes:

تمشی السنور إليه وهی لاهية

مشی العذاری عليهن الجلابيب

(The cat would gleefully walk towards it like the walk of umarried girls who wear cloaks.)

This is not the occasion to discuss the unique simile found in this couplet. Readers must however keep in mind that in the *jāhiliyyah* period there did not just exist women who would go out while being heavily embellished, but also found in that society were women belonging to the nobility who would wear large cloaks over their coverings when they would go out. The Qur'ān has directed Muslim women to draw part of their *jilbābs* over them so that the face is also fully covered. It is this *jilbāb* which is still in vogue amongst our elderly decent women who live in villages and it is this which has now assumed the shape of a *burqa'* with the passage of time in consonance with development in fashion. If the proponents of civilization and culture of today regard this *burqa'* to be against civilization and culture, then let them do so; the Qur'ān, however, contains a very clear directive in its favour. Only those people can negate this directive who claim to be more cultured than God and His Messenger.

The words ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ prescribe a distinctive sign for Muslim women so that wherever they go every person can recognize them from afar that these are Muslim women and do not dare tease them. And if he does, then he must fully realize the consequences. In those times, there existed in Madīnah non-Muslim women as well who were not bound by any restrictions of dress and intermingling. Moreover, slave-maidens were also present whose social and moral status was low. For this reason, miscreants had many opportunities to tease them. If while walking they would pass a sarcastic remark on a Muslim woman and would be called to account for this, they would reply by saying that they reckoned that they were speaking to slave-maiden of a certain person and that they wanted to ask a certain question from her. After this mark of distinction was prescribed for

Muslim women, such excuses were done away with.

No one should be misled by these words that it was a temporary measure that was adopted to secure Muslim women from the mischief of miscreants and it is no longer needed. Firstly, all directives have a cause and it does not mean that if that cause ceases to exist the directives will become null and void. Secondly, can a sane person claim that today's circumstanes are not a thousand times worse than those of that period? Moreover, today's society has become totally devoid of the concepts of modesty and chastity taught by the Qur'ān.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا are meant to create ease in the directive. It means that women must try their best to observe this caution. If in spite of this caution they make a mistake, then God is Forgiving and Ever Merciful.

لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّ الْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُوْنَكَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۶۰﴾ مَّلْعُوْنِيْنَ ۚ اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا ﴿۶۱﴾[66]

These verses threaten the miscreants and the Hypocrites that if these people do not abstain from their mischief, then the attitude of forgoing their blemishes will change. The Prophet (sws) is directly addressed and told that he will be directed to hold them accountable on every such occasion. Then they will find very little opportunity to live in this city. After this whatever time they will spend in it, they will remain accursed. They shall be seized at every step. They shall be caught and executed in an exemplary manner.

The word مَّرَضٌ in وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ refers to jealousy, envy and malice. This faction of the Hypocrites was not only afflicted with weak intent and will, it had great jealousy for the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. However, unlike the disbelievers, due to cowardice they tried to harm the cause of Islam and Muslims by infiltrating in their ranks.

The words وَّ الْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ refer to the faction of the Hypocrites

66. If these Hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts and the scandal mongers of Madīnah do not desist, We will incite you against them. Then they will seldom get a chance to live with you. Cursed shall they be. Wherever they are seized, they shall be slain mercilessly.

that was very adept in spreading propaganda, hearsay and disinformation. The purpose was to create discouragement and dismay among the Muslims and to disparage their moral repute. A very prominent example of this behaviour on their part can be seen in the incidents of the battle of Aḥzāb and of the marriage between Zayd (rta) and Zaynab (rta). In lexicons, the word ارجاف means to spread the propaganda of negative and mischievous news to create discord and discontent among people. It is evident that such propaganda specialists do not merely exist in current times; their pundits were also found in earlier times.

The linguistic meaning of لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ is "We would incite and stir you up against them." The implication is that till then, the Almighty had directed the Prophet (sws) to ignore and forgive them; however, instead of giving due regard to this, they are becoming audacious day by day. If they do not desist from this prank of theirs, God will order to seize them after which they will seldom get the chance to continue to live in Madīnah. In the first place, they will not be able to live in this city. And if they would be able to do so, then it will be with God's curse and damnation. The words اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا depict this state of theirs. Thus, in later times, it was this very fate which the Hypocrites met. Those among them who did not mend their ways ended up with the same fate as that of the miscreants of the Quraysh and the Jews. Details have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Tawbah.

سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾[67]

This verse is precisely of the same style as verse 28 earlier. The implication is that the Almighty dealt with the Hypocrites and the disbelievers of the past who opposed prophets of God in this way. So, this established practice of God must be kept in mind by the Prophet (sws). He will deal with his enemies in the same way. God's practice never changes.

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67. Such has been the practice of God about those who have gone before them. And you shall find no change in the practice of God.

Section VI: Verses (63-73)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. They first sound a reminder of the Day of Judgement. The addressees are told that if merely because the Prophet (sws) is unable to disclose its time of arrival or unable to make people behold it on their request they regard it to be a bluff, then this means that they are not far-sighted. Though its time of arrival is known to God only, it is certain to come. On that day, no one will be able to support or intercede for anyone. On the contrary, each person will himself or herself be responsible for his or her deeds and responsibilities. On that day, the excuse of people that they followed their leaders and it is they who led them astray shall not be acceptable.

After this Muslims, especially the Hypocrites are warned that they should not resort to tormenting and distressing the Messenger as done by the Jews in the case of Moses (sws). If they do so they will meet the same fate as the Jews: the Almighty absolved Moses (sws) of every blame and inflicted his opponents with an eternal curse. The right attitude Muslims should adopt – which will guarantee their success both in this world and in the next – is to listen and obey their Prophet (sws).

At the end, man is warned that the Almighty has blessed him with a great status: He entrusted him with something of which only he was worthy of in the heavens and the earth. His glory depends on discharging the rights of this trust granted to him. If he does so, he is worthy of being prostrated to by the angels. If he does recognize this responsibility, then he is worthy of being thrown into the deepest depths of error. The essential consequence of this trust is that one day he be held accountable for it. Those who violated it should be punished and those who gave it due regard be rewarded. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

يَسْئَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۚ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٦٥﴾ يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ
وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِى النَّارِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰلَيْتَنَآ اَطَعْنَا اللّٰهَ وَاَطَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّآ اَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَ
كُبَرَآءَنَا فَاَضَلُّوْنَا السَّبِيْلَا ﴿٦٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ

اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰذَوْا مُوْسٰى فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْا ؕ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا
اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ
فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧١﴾ اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَاَشْفَقْنَ
مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا ﴿٧٢﴾ لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَ
الْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَيَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

People ask you about the Hour of Doom. Say: "Only God has knowledge of it. And what do you know, the Hour may well be near at hand." (63)

Indeed, God has laid His curse upon the disbelievers and has prepared for them the punishment of the Fire in which they will abide forever. There they shall find neither any protector nor helper. On the day when their heads will be rotated and turned about in the Fire. They will say: "Would that we had obeyed God and obeyed His Messenger!" And will say: "Our Lord! We obeyed our leaders and our chiefs, but they led us astray. Our Lord: "Doubly punish them and heavily curse them." (64-68)

Believers! Be not like those who tormented Moses. So, God absolved him from their blames and He stood honourable in the sight of God. Believers! Fear God and speak the truth. God will set right your deeds and forgive your sins. And those who will continue to obey God and His Messenger have attained great success. (69-71)

We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and feared it and man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he is unjust and one who is overcome by emotions. So that God punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, both men and women; and shower His mercy on believing men and women. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (72-73)

Explanation

يَسْـَٔلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٦٣﴾[68]

The verse states that when these miscreants and mischief-mongers are threatened of the Hereafter, they make fun of it. They would say

68. People ask you about the Hour of Doom. Say: "Only God has knowledge of it. And what do you know, the Hour may well be near at hand."

that they have been hearing this threat for a long time; it has not materialized nor it ever will; if it is to come, then why does it not come; what is the time of its arrival? In other words, they would imply that this is just a bluff which has no basis and that they will not be affected by such bluffs.

The words قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ask the Prophet (sws) to tell them that only God knows its time of arrival; only He knows this secret of the universe; neither the Prophet (sws) himself has any knowledge of it nor any other person; however, it is certain to come, as is being informed to them; if he cannot tell them about its exact time of arrival, then this cannot negate its arrival. At another place in the Qur'ān it is asserted that denying something simply because its time of arrival is not known is foolish logic. The Hereafter aside, there are so many common realities of our life which no sane person denies even if their time is not known. The sphere of man's knowledge is very limited. He does not know every thing. The world around man and that within him as well as his intellect and nature bear testimony to the Hereafter. So, making fun of it merely because its time is not known is idiocy and self-deception.

The style found in وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا expresses the exaltedness, importance and dreadful nature of something. This is an answer to the sarcasm and disdain found in the question raised by the opponents: they make fun of people merely because these people are not able to tell them the time of arrival of the Day of Judgement – what may they know? It may be near at hand.

This answer also shows that it will soon manifest itself. These words actually sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and severely reprimand those who make fun of the Day of Judgement. It needs to be kept in mind that since Muḥammad (sws) is the last Prophet, after him only one phase remains for the worldly court: the Day of Judgement. Details are forthcoming at appropriate places of this book.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۚ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٦٥﴾[69]

69. Indeed, God has laid His curse upon the disbelievers and has prepared for them the punishment of the Fire in which they will abide forever. There they shall find neither any protector nor helper.

The warning concealed in the above verse is brought to the surface in this one: people who are today denying the Day of Judgement should listen carefully: God has smacked His curse on them, and has prepared for them the torment of Hell in which they will stay forever and no one will help or protect them there. Neither the partners they ascribe to God, nor will their intercessors they trust be of any avail to them. Moreover, their own comrades and supporters will not be able to help them.

يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يٰلَيْتَنَآ اَطَعْنَا اللّٰهَ وَاَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّآ اَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَآءَنَا فَاَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا ﴿٦٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٨﴾[70]

The word تَقْلِيبٌ means to turn over and rotate. When meat is cooked on fire it is rotated from one side to another. The verse states that these people are going to meet this very fate. They will be dragged faceward into Hell in such a way that their face will be roasted from both sides. The face is specially mentioned because it is the most prominent manifestation of arrogance when a person haughtily evades the truth. When the face is to meet this fate then the rest of the limbs too will meet no different a fate. The verse states that they would express their yearning of obeying God and His Messenger and of not being lured into deception by their leaders once they see Day of Judgement they are today making fun of. On that day, they will openly blame their leaders and elders for their own error. They would express their despair on submitting to them and thereby being led astray. They will request God to give them double the punishment of their own since these leaders were the reason of their own misguidance and to smack a greater curse on them. Here their request is only cited. The Almighty's response to it has already been stated in verse 38 of Sūrah al-A'rāf as: لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ ie., it shall be double both for them and for their leaders. This has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

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70. On the day when their heads will be rotated and turned about in the Fire. They will say: "Would that we had obeyed God and obeyed His Messenger!" And will say: "Our Lord! We obeyed our leaders and our chiefs, but they led us astray. Our Lord: "Doubly punish them and heavily curse them."

Two words: سَادَتَنَا and كُبَرَآءَنَا occur here. The first of these obviously refers to chiefs and the second refers to their religious and family leaders. It is not permissible to blindly follow any of them. God has granted every person the faculty to discern good from evil. It is thus the obligation of every individual to use it. If he trips at times while using it, God, hopefully, will support him and forgive him. However, a person who blindly consigns his reins to others will meet the fate described by this verse.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰذَوْا مُوْسٰى فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْا ؕ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا ﴿۶۹﴾[71]

The topic of the Day of Judgement arose during the discourse as an admonition. Prior to that the attitude of Hypocrite men and women who were spiritually tormenting the Prophet (sws) was being discussed. They were harassing him through conspiracies and by casting aspersions on him. After this admonition, the previous topic is taken up again. Muslims are now warned that they must not follow the footsteps of the Jews who tormented Moses (sws) through accusations, objections and conspiracies. However, God absolved him from every accusation and calumny and it was with great honour that he spent his life and was given death. On the other hand, those who tormented and harassed him were humiliated in the Herein and the Hereafter. Though the words of address used are general, yet they are directed at the Hypocrites.

The torture through which the Israelites put Moses (sws) is mentioned in the Qur'ān through his own tongue thus:

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ (٦١: ٥)

And remember when Moses (sws) said to his people:"O People of My Nation! Why do you torment me even though you know very well that I have come to you as a messenger of God?" (61:5)

It is mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy that when Moses (sws) roused the Israelites to attack Palestine and they showed cowardice as per their tradition, Moses (sws) reprimanded them in the following

71. Believers! Be not like those who tormented Moses. So, God absolved him from their blames and He stood honourable in the sight of God.

words:

> Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the LORD your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. (Deuteronomy, 9:7)

It is repeatedly mentioned in the Torah that whenever the Israelites were faced with a trial, they would blame Moses (sws) and start reproaching him. Alluded to below are some examples in this regard.

When the Israelites met with tribulations in Egypt after Moses (sws) began his preaching, they regarded him to be their cause. They said that it was because of him that they were inflicted with trials before his birth and still face them after his birth.

When Moses (sws) led them out of Egypt and the Egyptians chased them, the whole nation started to complain and blame Moses for their destruction in a desolate place.

After crossing the river, when Moses (sws) went to the mount of Ṭūr to receive the Torah, they said that they have been forsaken by him and that he will not return. They then had a calf carved out by Samurai and began worshipping it.

Korah instituted a party and spread the propaganda that a single person (Moses) has the monopoly of knowing religion and become the leader of people whereas all are equal in the sight of God. This person has no distinction over them.

While living in the desert, when they had to face hardships in acquiring food, they started to openly reproach Moses (sws). They said that was Egypt even devoid of graveyards that this person has brought them out to let them die in a desert.

When arrangements had been made to provide them with food through *mann* and *salwā* and water through twelve springs, they started to brood and complain that *mann* and *salwā* are not nourishing enough and that they remember the cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions of Egypt.

When Moses (sws) roused them to attack Palestine, they replied to him that he wants to have them decimated at the hands of its powerful and mighty inhabitants. So they contended that they were not prepared for this. Moses (sws) and his Lord should go there to fight while they will stay put.

The touching and painful words with which Moses (sws) has repeatedly expressed his sorrow in the Torah on this attitude of the Israelites show the torment he had to suffer at the hands of his people. The Qur'ān, while referring to these anguishes inflicted by the Israelites, has counseled Muslims to not behave similarly with their own messenger the way the Jews did with Moses (sws). If they do this, they will meet the same fate as they met.

The words فَبَرَّاَهُ اللّٰهُ مِمَّا قَالُوْا ؕ وَ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَجِيْهًا state that ultimately the Almighty absolved Moses (sws) from all blames. His righteousness and sincerity were evident against all blames and slanders cast on him and his enemies were humiliated. He was regarded by God to be noble, honourable and successful. His majesty shone in this world and it will also shine in the next one. These are indirect tidings for the Prophet (sws).

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿۷۰﴾ يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۷۱﴾[72]

After directing the Muslims to abstain from the attitude adopted by the Jews, now the right attitude they should adopt is delineated. This attitude is a requisite of faith in God and His Messenger. The verse states that they should fear God. In other words, they should not be among those who torment God and His Messenger. He seizes criminals after a time and when He does so no one can escape His grasp nor can anyone liberate anyone from His clutches.

The words وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا state that if Muslims lay claim to faith, they should say what is the direct consequence of this faith. This is a reference to the acknowledgement of سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed). This acknowledgement substantiates faith and opens the way for further guidance. Also found in it is a subtle sarcasm on the statement of the Jews: سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا (we listened and we disobeyed). In other words, the statement of Jews was totally the opposite. They laid claim to faith but their words were contrary to this claim. Muslims are therefore directed that if they want to adhere to faith with

72. Believers! Fear God and speak the truth. God will set right your deeds and forgive your sins. And those who will continue to obey God and His Messenger have attained great success.

righteousness, then their motto should be: سَمِعْنَا و اَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed).

The words يُّصْلِحْ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ express the consequence of speaking straight. If people resolve the contradiction between their words and deeds, God will make their deeds bear fruit and earn them blessings and make them take very step in the right direction. In this situation, if they commit any mistake, it will be forgiven by God. People who want to adopt the right path are not cosigned by the Almighty to Satan.

The words وَ مَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا on the principle of gradual progression of the discourse has made it evident that the words قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا actually imply: سَمِعْنَا و اَطَعْنَا. It is stated that people who after pledging the covenant of "to listen and obey" show obedience to God and His Messenger at every step, attain great success. The implication is that this is not a deal that runs in a loss. It is, on the contrary, the key to an everlasting kingdom. So let those who want to be victorious try out his mettle.

اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ الْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَ اَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَ حَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا ﴿۷۲﴾ لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَ الْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَ يَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۷۳﴾[73]

Here the real nobility in the status of man is delineated: he is entrusted with the promise of obeying God. This promise is based on the freedom to exercise one's will and intention. Hence it is only human beings who are entitled to this promise. The reason is that only that person is entitled to this promise who has the freedom to exercise his will and intention. The question of a promise does not arise with creations which do not have this freedom. This promise was taken by the Almighty from all the progeny of Adam (sws), and it is this promise which is the foundation of the status of *khilāfah*

73. We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and feared it and man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he is unjust and one who is overcome by emotions. So that God punish the Hypocrites and the idolaters, both men and women; and shower His mercy on believing men and women. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

man and his progeny enjoy on earth. It is to manifest the consequences of this *khilāfah* that God promised Adam (sws) to bestow His guidance, book and *sharī'ah* on him. At the same time, the Almighty also warned him that those who follow His guidance will deserve a place in Paradise, and those who disobey it will be cast into Hell. In order to fulfill this promise, the Almighty sent His prophets and messengers who revived this promise of obedience and worship to the Almighty with their respective nations and peoples, and also informed them of the consequences of breaking it.

Since this promise is based on the freedom of exercising one's will, it is like a double-edged sword. If a person fulfills the promise of serving the Almighty while exercising his freedom, then no one is of higher status than him in the eyes of God. On the contrary, if he does not do so, then this would mean that he has made the greatest means of respect for him to be his greatest humiliation.

Every promise is a trust and it is the essential consequence of every trust that the being who has given this trust hold the trustee accountable whether he fulfilled his obligation towards it or not. This necessitates a day of reward and punishment. Thus the Almighty will gather everyone one day and after reviewing the register of their accounts decide who are the disbelievers and Hypocrites thereby deserving Hell and who are the believers and sincere thereby deserving Paradise.

It is evident from the words اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَاَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا that the Almighty presented this trust of obeying God through free will before the heavens, the earth and the mountains but they feared it and tendered their excuse from bearing this trust. This excuse put forth by the heavens and the earth can be through their state and can also be verbal. God understands both these types of conversation of His creation. It is explicitly stated in the Qur'ān that every object of this universe glorifies the Almighty but this glorification is understood by God only. No one else does.

Similarly, to bear each responsibility, a specific ability is needed. In the absence of that ability that particular responsibility cannot be borne. Not every piece of land is conducive to cultivation. At times, an ordinary piece of land entrusted with seeds not only protects them but also nourishes and nurtures them. However, a seed cannot be nourished in a sea, a mountain or a desert. It will go waste.

This also is a fact that if a thing does not have the ability to accept another thing, it will surely evade it. For example, our eyes do not have the ability to bear light beyond a certain intensity. They will become dazed in such a case. In a similar manner, our body can only bear heat and cold to a certain degree. If this degree is exceeded, not only will our body evade them, it will also fear it. Our stomach also has the ability to digest only certain types of edibles. If we try to eat something other than these, our stomach will not be able to digest them even though they may be very expensive. Similar is the case of the heavens and the earth and the mountains in the case of this trust (*amānah*). They did not have the capacity to bear it; so, they refused to do so.

The words وَحَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ point to the rank and status of man: what the heavens and the earth, seas and mountains could not bear was borne by him. It is evident from this that though man is a very trivial creation of this universe with respect to his material substance; however, with respect to his abilities and potentials, he is higher than the heavens, wider than the earth and stronger and loftier than the mountains. It is for this reason that every object of this world has been made subservient to it but he is subservient to none except God. If he does become subservient to another being, then this is a matter of shame for him.

The words اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا refer to the ability of man that entitled him to bear this trust (*amānah*): the existence of contrary motives in him was necessary so that he could be tried and tested. This would show how he would abide by the promise of remaining obedient to God in the presence of contradictory motives and emotions and how is he able to fulfill its obligations. Thus he is made ظَلُوْم (*ẓalūm*) and جَهُوْل (*jahūl*). *Ẓalūm* is a person who is unjust in spite of being fully aware of justice and the truth. Similarly, *juhūl* is a person who in spite of having the traits of knowledge and forbearance is often overcome by ignorance and frenzy. This tussle is the real test of a person and it is this tussle on which rests his noble status. If in spite of having the freedom to succumb to injustice, a person diligently adheres to justice merely to please the Almighty, and if he also has the liberty to be lured away by his base desires, he controls his desires merely to please the Almighty, then undoubtedly his status is above the angels. This is because the latter do not have to face this tussle in

worshipping the Almighty. Their path is free from any pitfalls and they are not aware of the emotions of *ẓulm* and *jahl*. On the other hand, if a human being worships his Lord, then he has to fight with his base desires and with Satan at every step. For this reason, his worship is superior to the worship of the angels. By analogy, just as a human being on the basis of this freedom to exercise his will can reach the summit, he can also fall into the lowest pit if he misuses this freedom. It is to this reality that the following verse of Sūrah al-Tīn points:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنٰهُ اَسْفَلَ سٰفِلِيْنَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ (٩٥: ٤-٦)

And We have created man in the finest of moulds. Then, We reverted him to the lowest except those, who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. (95:4-6)

The words لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَيَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا state the result of this trust being anded over to mankind: its necessary consequence is that a day come when people be held accountable regarding this trust – whether they fulfilled their obligation towards it or not. As a consequence, those – whether men or women – who adopted hypocrisy or committed polytheism be punished for being dishonest and breaking their covenant, and those – whether men or women – who fulfilled their obligation towards it while being steadfast on faith become worthy of their Lord's mercy.

It has been explained at another place that when the preposition على occurs with the word توبه (*tawbah*), then the meaning of mercy is also incorporated in it. For this reason, these are glad tidings for the believers that though this responsibility is very heavy, yet God is Forgiving and Merciful. He has left the doors of repentance (*tawbah*) open for believing men and women. If because of some weakness they are guilty of some *ẓulm* and *jahl* and then repent, God will accept their repentance and have mercy on them.

On these lines ends the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. This is one of the most difficult *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān and I have always hesitated to write its *tafsīr*. Though I had solved its complexities to the best of my knowledge many years ago, but have always remained worried

whether I would be able to pen down what I have in mind. Now, the learned readers of this book will decide whether I have been able to do justice with its difficulties or not and if yes, then to what extent. However, I have tried my best. It was my desire that I still continue deliberating on it. However, the final time has come to consign this trust to paper. So, I have written whatever I had in mind. What seems correct to them, readers may accept, and what seems amiss may best be ignored by them. A human being is *ẓalūm* and *jahūl* come what may. God is Forgiving and Ever Merciful. I beseech Him to pardon my blemishes. و آخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين (and our last statement is that gratitude is for God, Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābad
17th Shawwāl 1394 AH
3rd November 1974 AD
9 am Sunday

Sūrah Sabā'

Introduction to the Fifth Group

With this group begins the fifth group of Qur'ānic *sūrahs* which ends on Sūrah Ḥujurāt. The first thirteen *sūrahs* of this group – Sabā' to Aḥqāf – are Makkan and the last three – Muḥammad, Fatḥ and Ḥujurat – are Madīnan.

Central Theme of the Fifth Group

Like the previous group, the topics discussed in this group are monotheism, propehthood and the hereafter. These three form the foundation of the message of the Qur'ān. However, the methodology of argumentation and the linguistic style are different. The central theme of the group is to validate monotheism. This validation will seem very prominent in all the *sūrahs* of the group. Other topics are subsumed under this central theme and only as an explanation of its implications.

Central Theme of Sūrah Sabā'

The central theme of this first *sūrah* of the group is to validate monotheism and the hereafter. Both these beliefs themselves are based on gratitude and what it entails. The addressees of the *sūrah* are the affluent Quraysh.

Analysis of the Discourse

In the following paragraphs, the meanings encompassed by the discourse are concisely stated so that the sequence between all the parts of the *sūrah* and its central theme becomes evident.

Verses (1-9): In this introductory part, people are invited to the fact that God alone is worthy of gratitude. This is because whatever the heavens and the earth contain belongs to Him and in the Hereafter too He will reign supreme. His knowledge is all-embracing; hence, neither any deed of a person is concealed from Him nor will anyone be able to help others through their baseless intercession. Those who think that the Hereafter will never come are in deep error. The Hereafter is an incontestable reality and the obvious corollary of God's attributes. Those who have the slightest of knowledge are aware that the concepts of monotheism and Hereafter to which the Qur'ān is calling them are absolute realities. Only the negligent and the indifferent are making fun of them. Their real

ailment is that they have become devoid of the traits of repentance and seeking a lesson. If they had this ability, they would have seen that God can seize them whenever He wants and wherever He wants.

Verses (10-14): In order to warn the affluent Qurasyh, the examples of David (sws) and Solomon (sws) are cited before them: God granted them with all the favours of this world but they never became arrogant and haughty and remained grateful and obedient to Him. They were never lured away by the devils into their obedience; on the contrary, they made the devils follow them. God makes the devils become subservient to those who follow their Lord. However, devils get the better of those who are ungrateful to God and they become the slaves of these devils.

Verses (15-21): The example of the queen of Sheba is cited from which it is evident that nations who after being bestowed with God's favours become arrogant and spread anarchy in the land instead of becoming grateful are punished by God in an exemplary manner. The people of Sabā' fulfilled the prediction of Satan about them. As a result, the Almighty deprived them of all His favours and made them a tale of the ancients.

Verses (22-27): The baseless concepts of polytheism and intercession are refuted and the Prophet (sws) is directed to leave the matter of these Idolaters to God if they want to persist in their stubbornness merely because of arrogant egotism; he has done what was required of him; now the Almighty will decide their fate. He is aware of everything and is about to pass His judgement in every matter.

Verses (28-33): An answer is given to those who were raising the objection that they were not willing to believe in the Qur'ān until they are shown the punishment they are being threatened with.

Verses (34-39): The real reason on account of which the disbelievers were rejecting the Qur'ān is referred to: they regarded themselves to be favoured ones of God because of the affluence and status they possessed in this world. They think that just as they are successful people in this world, in the next one too (if ever it comes) they will be successful. The fact of the matter is that God gives the favours of this world to people to test and try them. It is meant to be seen whether such people become grateful or not. In the Hereafter, God will deal with a person on the basis of his deeds.

Verses (40-43): Among the various deities the Idolaters worshipped were angels; they are warned that on the Day of Judgement these angels will declare their acquittal from them when they will be asked if these Idolaters worshipped them; the angels will reply that they have in fact been worshipping the jinn and they themselves renounce having any relationship with the Idolaters.

Verses (44-54): In this concluding section of the *sūrah*, attention is first directed at the great favour done by God to these people in the form of the Qur'ān. They were the ones who were not conversant with any divine scripture before this. After that they are very affectionately asked to seriously reflect on the matter before they take a decision. Finally, they are threatened that if this time lapses, they will regret forever but they will not be afforded any other opportunity.

Section I: Verses (1-9)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (١) يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاء وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ (٢) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَى وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِن ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣) لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٤) وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رِّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ (٥) وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقَّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ (٦) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ إِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (٧) أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللهِ كَذِبًا أَم بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلِ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ (٨) أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُم مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضِ إِن نَّشَأْ نَخْسِفْ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطْ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاء إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ (٩)

God, to whom belongs everything between the heavens and the earth, is alone worthy of gratitude! And He alone will be shown gratitude to in the world to come. And He is the real Wise One, the All-Knowing. He has knowledge of all that goes into the earth and all that comes out from it and all that descends from the sky and all that ascends to it. And He alone is the Forgiving One, the Merciful. (1-2)

And the disbelievers declare: "The Day of Judgment will never come to us." Say: "Yes! By the Lord Who knows all that is unknown, it will surely come to you! Nothing at all is hidden from Him neither in the

heavens nor in the earth nor anything smaller or greater than it but is recorded in a clear book. So that He may reward those who professed faith and did righteous deeds; it is they who shall be granted forgiveness and a noble provision. And those who fervently strive to defeat Our revelations shall have a special share in the painful torment." (3-5)

And those endowed with knowledge regard what has been revealed to you from your Lord as the very truth and it leads to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy One. (6)

And those who have disbelieved say: "Shall we show you a man who claims that when you will be reduced to bits you will be raised in a new creation? Has he invented a lie about God, or is he mad?" In fact, those who deny the life to come are doomed and inflicted with deep error. (7-8)

Have they not seen the heavens and the earth before and behind them? If We want, We can make the earth to cave in with them or let fragments of the sky fall upon them. Indeed, there is a sign in this for every penitent person. (9)

Explanation

الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (١)[1]

I have alluded to earlier that the foundation of this *sūrah* rests on the pillar of gratitude and what it entails. In the exegesis of Sūrah Fātiḥah, it has already been explained that it is on gratitude that monotheism and the edifice of the whole religion stands. Thanking someone who blesses us with favours is explicitly found in human nature. A person is grateful to all those who do a good term to him. A person who does not express gratitude to another for such favours is a wretched and despicable human being. It is on this premise that the question arises as to who has created all these favours and blessings found between the heavens and the skies? Man is benefitting from them every instant and his own survival depends on them. Where have the sun, the moon, the clouds, the winds, the stars and the heavenly bodies come from? Obviously, the correct answer to all these questions is that all these things have been created by God and are subservient to His laws. It has been indicated in previous *sūrahs* that this was the very answer which even the most ardent opponents of the Qur'ān would give. In the verse under discussion, the Qur'ān has sounded a reminder of this obvious reality that the very God Who is the creator and

1. God, to whom belongs everything between the heavens and the earth, is alone worthy of gratitude! And He alone will be shown gratitude to in the world to come. And He is the real Wise One, the All-Knowing.

master of everything in the heavens and the earth is alone worthy of gratitude by all His creatures who are benefitting from all these objects created by Him. The essential requirement of this gratitude is that everyone should worship and obey Him and associate no one in worshipping and obeying Him. This is because no other being has any role in the creation or governance of these objects. If man benefits from others, then this is only through a means and middle agency. Hence if man has any obligation towards these benefits then this is subservient to his obligation to God and cannot equal or supersede this obligation to God.

While the earlier part of the verse mentioned the obligation every human being owes to God in this world, the words وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ mention the obligation which will become evident in the Hereafter. It is said that his *ḥamd* will take place in the Hereafter as well. As a result, many points become clear:

Firstly, the essential consequence of the elaborate providence found in this world is that the Hereafter manifests itself. In the absence of it, this providence is totally meaningless and purposeless. This has been explained at a number of instances in this exegesis; hence I will content myself to these brief words here.

Secondly, this is a reference to the declaration of gratitude sung by the believers in the Hereafter when they see all the realities with their eyes and also witness the fulfillment of all promises of God. The words in Sūrah Yūnus are: وَ آخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ العَالَمِيْن (١٠: ١٠) (And their last cry will be: "Only God, Lord of the worlds, is in fact worthy of gratitude, (10:10))."

Thirdly, these words are a total negation of intercession and deities. All deities and their intercession on whose basis the Idolaters had no fear of Hereafter will be rendered baseless. None of them will be of any benefit to them. On that day, the Idolaters will curse their deities and the deities will renounce these worshippers of theirs. Every one will be brought before the One God. He will announce His decision and every one will become aware that only God, Lord of the worlds, is worthy of gratitude. In Sūrah Qaṣaṣ, this fact is stated thus: لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَى وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٨: ٧٠) (He alone deserves gratitude in this world and in the Hereafter too He will shown gratitude and in His hands is the judgement of all matters and before Him you will be brought forth, (28:70)).

The words وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ substantiate from the attributes of God all the claims stated above. He is the Wise and All-Knowing; hence, it is essential that He bring about a day in which He reward the grateful and punish the ingrates for their attitude. If this does not happen, then this

world is a place of amusement in fact cruel amusement and, God forbid, it shall have to be accepted that its creator is not wise; He is a merry-maker. Yet every bit and part of this universe bears witness that its creator is a wise being. Similarly, a corollary of He being wise is that justice should not be nullified by anyone's intercession because this too will negate His wisdom. Moreover, He is also all-knowing because since He has created everything, it is essential that He also be aware of every move and sojourn of every particle of what He has created. The words in Sūrah Mulk are: أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ (٦٧: ١٤) (Would He not know Who has created? (14:67)). The essential requirement of His all-embracing knowledge is that while deciding a matter He not need information from any other person nor anyone deceive Him by His false intercession.

This also should be kept in mind that all the above has been said in an emphatic way implying that when God is the real Master and Creator, the Wise and Knowledgeable one, then who else can be worthy of gratitude.

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاء وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ (٢)[2]

This is an explanation of the attribute of "the knowledgeable one" mentioned in the previous verse: every particle of this universe is in His knowledge and is aware of the moving and stationery states of all objects. He is aware of the seed sown in the earth and also of the plant that later sprouts. Similarly, the calamities and blessings which descend from the sky are in His information as well as those which ascend in it. In other words, His knowledge embraces the microcosm as well as the macrocosm and He is watching over everything. The minutest of things in His kingdom is not beyond His knowledge; neither is it possible that anything can move in any place in this universe without His permission nor interfere in matters. The reason that the all-embracing nature of God's knowledge is explained is that a big factor that leads to polytheism is this concept of the polytheists that how can what transpires in every nook and corner of this unfathomable universe always remain in God's notice; how can He be aware of every word and deed that emanates from each and every human being; how can He be continuously aware of every sorrow that is afflicted to a person. For this reason, they had divided the various affairs of this universe and allotted a deity to each.

2. He has knowledge of all that goes into the earth and all that comes out from it and all that descends from the sky and all that ascends to it. And He alone is the Forgiving One, the Merciful.

To acquire favour with God, they had invented various mediators and intermediaries. They worshipped the jinn as they thought that they bring news from the heavens. They regarded the angels as deities thinking that they intercede before God. This verse has refuted all these superstitions: God's knowledge embraces everything; hence no one is His associate and partner. He is Himself governing all the affairs of this universe and does not need any help in this regard.

The words وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ imply that God is not unjust and oppressive so that to make Him happy or shield one self from calamities some intercessors and intermediaries are needed. In fact, He is very Merciful and Forgiving. To acquire His mercy and forgiveness all that is needed is that a person seeks repentance for his sins and makes amends. It should be kept in mind here that one of the common factors which lead to polytheism is the deception of the polytheists that God is a very horrible being. After that, in order to make Him happy they invented various intermediaries according to their own concepts. This part of the verse negates this very notion of theirs.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَى وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِن ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣)[3]

The first verse of the *sūrah* had mentioned that God is all wise and all knowledgeable. The second verse stated the all embracing nature of His knowledge. Now this verse says that since all this is so, then an essential requirement of all this is that the Day of Judgement is bound to come; yet the stubborn are not willing to believe in it and arrogantly reject it.

The words قُلْ بَلَى وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ emphatically convey from the tongue of Muḥammad (sws) a response to this attitude of the rejecters. The statement is given in the form of an oath sworn by him on the Almighty and is of the same intensity as that of the rejecters.

The phrase عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ is a *badal* (permutative) of رَبِّي. Ie., by my Lord who is aware of the unknown from whom nothing in the heavens and the earth is hidden; everything is written in a clear register.

The reason that the extent of God's knowledge has been portrayed in this verse is to warn and threaten the rejecters who were obdurately denying the Day of Judgement. They should remember that it will not

3. And the disbelievers declare: "The Day of Judgment will never come to us." Say: "Yes! By the Lord Who knows all that is unknown, it will surely come to you! Nothing at all is hidden from Him neither in the heavens nor in the earth nor anything smaller or greater than it but is recorded in a clear book.

only come but when it comes each person will have to give account of all his deeds, whether big or small. At the same time, a clarification is also afforded: one of the reasons that the rejecters regarded this day to be far-fetched is that they regarded keeping the account of each and every word and deed of a person to be unlikely. In order to remove this misconception of theirs, this all-embracing nature of God's knowledge is mentioned just as it was mentioned earlier in the context of monotheism.

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٤) وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رِّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ (٥)[4]

These verses state the need of the Day of Judgement and why is its arrival necessary: if it does not come, then it would mean that the pious and the wicked are alike in the sight of God – which is self-evidently incorrect. God has not created this world on injustice; hence, it is essential that a day come in which the Almighty reward those who professed faith and did righteous deeds and punish those who tried to defeat the cause of God.

Here it needs to be kept in consideration that the real objective of the Day of Judgement stated here is to reward the believers. The reason is that it is precisely this which is the purpose of bringing about this day. Punishing the wrongdoers is not its purpose; it is only a consequence of that day. The Almighty has created this world to shower His mercy and the Day of Judgement also has the same purpose; however, an essential consequence is that those who do not make themselves worthy of this mercy will make themselves worthy of His wrath.

Two things are mentioned here for the believers: forgiveness and noble sustenance. The implication is that God will forgive the blemishes of those who lead their lives while being imbued faith and doing righteous deeds; the expression "noble sustenance" comprehensively signifies all the blessings and favours which they will receive in Paradise.

The disbelievers are mentioned here by the attribute: الَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ. The word معاجزة means to try to outdo one another in defeating one another. The implication is that those who are trying all out to defeat the revelations of God will be punished with a painful torment by Him. The obvious allusion is to the leaders of disbelievers who will be punished in a specific way. This specific punishment is called عَذَابٌ مِّن

4. So that He may reward those who professed faith and did righteous deeds; it is they who shall be granted forgiveness and a noble provision. And those who fervently strive to defeat Our revelations shall have a special share in the painful torment."

رِّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ. The word رجزٌ refers to a punishment that is very horrible.

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقَّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ (٦)[5]

This is a mention of the people blessed with real knowledge whether they belong to the People of the Book or who preserved the teachings of their prophets and scriptures or to the upright ones whose hearts became radiant with the light of the Qur'ān because of their innate yearning for the truth. The followers of the Ḥanifiyyah among the Arabs too come under this latter category. The verse states that these people regard what is revealed to Muḥammad (sws) as the absolute truth. In others words, these people support the belief in monotheism to which he is inviting them and the belief in life after death he is warning them of and regarding these beliefs to be true. As for those who are arrogantly denying these beliefs on the basis of the alleged deities, they are absolutely wrong. It is stated here to assure Muḥammad (sws) that if some careless and indifferent people are opposing him, he should not be bothered; sufficient it is for his faith that those blessed with knowledge and insight are his supporters. A person should care about sane and sensible people and not about those who are careless and indifferent.

The words وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ imply that these men of learning openly acknowledge the fact that this book undoubtedly guides people to the path of the powerful and praiseworthy God. In other words, the religions fabricated by others will necessarily lead people to the pit of doom and misguide them; however, this Book leads people to God. Here two attributes of God are mentioned: الْعَزِيزِ and الْحَمِيدِ. The former reflects His respect and power and the latter signifies that He alone is worthy of gratitude both in this world and the next. Both these attributes necessarily entail the belief of monotheism and life after death, as is evident from earlier discussions.

Evident from this also is the fact that in the terminology of the Qur'ān real knowledge is the comprehension of God and of the Hereafter only. If a person does not have this knowledge but at the same time has many other disciplines of knowledge in his mind, then they will become a burden for him and danger for others. The Qur'ān has regarded only those people as men of knowledge who have comprehension of God and

5. And those endowed with knowledge regard what has been revealed to you from your Lord as the very truth and it leads to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.

of the Hereafter:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء إِنَّ اللهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ (٣٥: ٤٨)

Only those among His servants fear God Who have knowledge. Indeed, God is Dominant and Forgiving. (35:48)

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ إِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (٧)[6]

After referring to the attitude of the believers in the previous verse, the attitude of those people is depicted in this verse who, being devoid of knowledge, are wandering in the darkness of disbelief. It is stated that these people are making fun of the Prophet (sws) and his message. They call upon people and tell them that they will show them a mad person who posing as a messenger of God claims that after dying and being reduced to dust they will be raised to life again. – In other words, this statement is not even worthy of any refutation.

أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللهِ كَذِبًا أَم بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلِ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ (٨)[7]

This verse furnishes further detail of the fun these people make and also an immediate response from the Almighty.

The words أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللهِ كَذِبًا أَم بِهِ جِنَّةٌ state the opinion of these people about Muḥammad (sws). According to them, he is either imputing falsehood to God that He has sent him as a messenger and whatever he is saying it is on behalf of God or he is a person possessed. The implication is that both these features exist in this person. He is an imposter as well as mad.

In the sentence بَلِ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ the Qur'ān has given an immediate reply to the fun made by these arrogant people and what an effective and majestic answer it is.

It is stated that these foolish people have made a very wrong assessment. Error lies neither in the messenger nor in his message; the real problem lies with these people who are not professing belief in the

6. And those who have disbelieved say: "Shall we show you a man who claims that when you will be reduced to bits you will be raised in a new creation?

7. Has he invented a lie about God, or is he mad?" In fact, those who deny the life to come are doomed and inflicted with deep error.

Hereafter. They are afflicted with punishment and have strayed deep into error. One type of error is that in which a person still has the potential to turn back and reform himself even though he may have done many bad things. However, those who are afflicted with the torment of the Hereafter can never turn back. All doors of hope have closed on them. The fate of such people is stated in present tense instead of the future tense because this fate of theirs is actually concealed in their attitude. In other words, they are caught in it at this very moment because of their arrogance.

أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُم مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضِ إِن نَّشَأْ نَخْسِفْ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطْ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاء إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ (٩)[8]

What was mentioned in the first verse of this section of verses is taken up again here in the last verse. It had been said in the first verse that whatever is in the heavens and the earth is in the hands of God and hence He alone deserves our gratitude both in this world and in the next. Here it is said that have not these arrogant people reflected on the fact that these heavens which are stretched over them like a roof and this earth which is spread below their feet like a floor and from which they are benefitting – who is holding them together? Obviously this task is beyond them. Had God not held them together, the heavens and the earth instead of giving benefit to them would have become a source for torment for them. The verse goes on to state that whenever God wants, He can have them as well as the earth submerged and have the heavens rain down stones for them instead of His mercy. Nothing of this universe is providing benefit out of its own accord. It is doing so at the behest of God. And nothing is in the direct control of human beings. It is because of God's directive that things are being of use to man. This is such a clear fact that makes it mandatory on man to not show arrogance on any favour and on the contrary become grateful to the Lord Who blessed him with these favours; moreover, instead of making a favour a means of showing disobedience to God and being rebellious to Him, he should use it to earn the pleasure of God and while following His directive.

This very topic is mentioned in Sūrah Fāṭir, the next *sūrah* which occurs as the pair of this *sūrah* in the following words:

إِنَّ اللهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَن تَزُولَا وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن

8. Have they not seen the heavens and the earth before and behind them? If We want, We can make the earth to cave in with them or let fragments of the sky fall upon them. Indeed, there is a sign in this for every penitent person.

بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٣٥: ٤١)

Undoubtedly, it is God who keeps the heavens and the earth from falling. And should they fall, none can hold them back but Him. Indeed, He is Forbearing and Forgiving. (35: 41)

The words إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ imply that if they had reflected on this aspect of the heavens and the earth then they would have found a great argument on what the Qur'ān was inviting them to; however, accessing this argument needs that a person possess the quest for the truth, the ability to learn a lesson from others and an inclined heart. No sign can effect those who do not have these traits.

Section II: Verses (10-21)

In the succeeding verses, two examples are cited. The first of them is that of David (sws) and Solomon (sws) who were given a great kingdom, profound knowledge and wisdom and numerous blessings found in the heavens and the earth. They never became arrogant and rebellious after receiving these favours; in fact, they continued to remain thankful and obedient to God. The reward God gave them of this gratitude was that He continued to increase His favours on them.

The second example is that of the people of Sabā' who lived in and governed a very populated and fertile territory; however, they became arrogant and unruly after receiving it. At last, the Almighty totally routed them through a storm and they became a tale of the ancients.

Both these examples are presented before the affluent and arrogant among the Quraysh. They two have both these options: if they want they can make themselves worthy of God's favours like David (sws) and Solomon (sws) and if they want they can invite His wrath by following the footsteps of the people of Sabā'. At the same time, a reminder exists in these examples that if God's law of reward and punishment comes into play in this world, why do they consider it to be improbable in the next world. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَأَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ (١٠) أَنِ اعْمَلْ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١) وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ

رَبِّهِ وَمَن يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٢) يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاء مِن مَّحَارِيبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَاتٍ اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ (١٣) فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَن لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (١٤) لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ (١٥) فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُم بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَى أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ (١٦) ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا الْكَفُورَ (١٧) وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ (١٨) فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (١٩) وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٠) وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ وَرَبُّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ (٢١)

And on David We bestowed Our special bounty: "Mountains, join him in his hymns and We gave the same directive to the birds also." And We softened iron for him: "Make loose-fitted coats of mail and secure their links and do righteous deeds all of you. Indeed, I am fully observing whatever you do." (10-11)

And We made the wind subservient to Solomon. He would travel away for a month and return back in a month and We caused a spring of molten brass to flow for him and from among the jinn also made those subservient to him, who would serve him at the behest of his Lord [and for them Our directive would be:] he among them who disobeys Our directives, We will make him taste the torment of Hell. They would make for him whatever he pleased: arches, statues, basins as large as watering-troughs, and stationed cauldrons – "Be grateful! House of David." And few among My servants are grateful. (12-13)

Thus when We had decreed his death none except a worm who would eat away his stick informed them of his death. So when he fell down, only then did the jinn realized that had they knowledge of the unknown, they would not have remained in this humiliating scourge. (14)

And for the natives of Sheba also, there was a great sign in their

dwelling-place: rows of orchards both on their left and on their right. "Benefit from the sustenance of your Lord and be grateful to Him." Luxuriant and fertile land and forgiving is your Lord. Then they disobeyed; so We let loose upon them the waters of the dam and replaced their gardens by two others bearing insipid fruit, tamarisks and a few Lote-trees. Thus did We punish them for their ingratitude; and We punish none but the ungrateful. (15-17)

And between them and the cities that We have blessed, We populated roadside settlements and measured out distances of travel between them. "Travel through them by night and day in safety." Thus they said: "Lord! Distance us from our journeys." And they sinned against their souls; so We made them a tale of the ancients and totally routed them. Indeed, there are signs in it for every steadfast, thankful person. (18-19)

And Satan made his view about them come true. So they followed him except for a group of believers. And he had no power over them. Our only aim was to distinguish those who had conviction in the Hereafter from those who were in doubt about it and Your Lord is watching over everything. (20-21)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَأَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ (١٠)[9]

Details of the blessings of God on the prophets David (sws) and Solomon (sws) have been mentioned earlier in Sūrah Anbiyā' and Sūrah Naml. Here I will confine myself to important points only.

The words يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ are an allusion to the gentle and moving voice of David (sws) bestowed to him by the Almighty. He would sit in the valley and sing hymns of God in a melodious tone that was sublime in nature. His rhymed invocations would be so poignant that trees and stones, beasts and birds – all would be overwhelmed by them and would join him in his chanting.

The real meaning of تَأويب is ترجيع which is to add one's tune into another's, repeat another person's voice and to join another person in chanting. In general, everything of this universe glorifies the Almighty and when it does so it also joins others who glorify God. However, the way the Almighty specially blessed David (sws) a gentle heart and melodious voice, in a similar way He had specially directed the mountains and the birds to join David (sws) when he glorifies the

9. And on David We bestowed Our special bounty: "Mountains, join him in his hymns and We gave the same directive to the birds also." And We softened iron for him:

Almighty and sings His hymns. In Sūrah Anbiyā', the words used are: وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُودَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ (٢١: ٧٩) (And We subjugated the mountains with David (sws) and also the birds, (21:79)).

The words وَأَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ portray the weaponry of David viz. the Almighty softened iron for him. Details of this have been provided in Sūrah Anbiyā' they became so advanced in melting iron and preparing thin links and buckles that such was the light-weight nature of these mail coats that they seemed to be made of cloth that was easy to wear. At the same time, being made of iron, they would be protective in nature.

أَنِ اعْمَلْ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١)[10]

The word سَابِغَات is used for a loose-fitted attire that covers the whole body. Here it is used to qualify loose-fitted mail coats. In the expression قَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ, the word سرد refers to the make of something and تقدير means to keep proportion in consideration while making something.

To make an attire from iron which is loose-fitted and its … are also proportionately spaced out would not have been possible unless the Almighty revealed to David (sws) the science of melting iron. He was the one who originated this technological advancement. With this invention he made a grand contribution to defence weaponry. This increased his military might in relation to his enemies.

Consider next the section of the verse: وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ. While in the previous section of the verse, encouragement is expressed to develop this science and benefit from it, in this section of the verse the moral right of this advancement is delineated: he should not go astray after being bestowed with this blessing and spread anarchy in the land through it; on the contrary, he should keep in mind that God is watching over whatever he is doing. This directive is given by God to David (sws) and all his family and followers. This is repeatedly mentioned in the Psalms and the Proverbs.

No one can deny the development man has made in science neither can anyone refute the benefits of this development as well as the benefits that will accrue in future from them. However, man has forgotten two things.

First, every invention of science owes itself to God's guidance. Second, it is the natural requirement of every favour and capability that they be regarded a trust from God, and while benefiting from them he should remember that the God Who has bestowed these is watching where he uses them. By ignoring both these things, science has become a

10. "Make loose-fitted coats of mail and secure their links and do righteous deeds, all of you. Indeed, I am fully observing whatever you do."

great danger for man. One cannot say when man may commit suicide from a weapon he has invented himself.

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَن يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٢)[11]

Just as the Almighty had given David (sws) the knack to put iron to his use and from which he had considerably enhanced his land might, in a similar way, he gave Solomon (sws) the knack and power to control the winds. Through this power, Solomon was able to enhance maritime power so much that his ships would travel for months without any hindrance. I have already mentioned in verse 81 of Sūrah Anbiyā' that his sail-ships would travel to far off shores and such was the scientific manner in which these sails were made that adverse winds or windless or little wind situations would not interfere in their travels. It is mentioned thus in Sūrah Ṣu'ād: فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاء حَيْثُ أَصَابَ (٣٧: ٣٦) (Thus We put the wind to his service which blew in harmony at his bidding wherever he intended to go, (38:36)). The words in Sūrah Anbiyā are: وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا (٢١: ٨١) (And for Solomon We subjugated the stormy wind which would blow at his behest to the land in which We placed blessings, (21:81)).

In the verse under discussion, the lengthy travels of these ships are under discussion. A single travel would span a whole month. Though winds are mentioned, yet ships are implied. It is as if the cause is mentioned to connote its effect. This is because the real power Solomon (sws) had was regarding winds. Obviously, the long travels were only possible if these ships be of large size and at the same time the system to control the wind be so profound and stable that they were able to set sail in every type of sea while facing various types of winds. Here, it may be borne in mind that in classical eloquent Arabic, the words غدوّ and رواح also occur while being divested of the night and day stipulation to merely mean "coming" and "going." Thus, in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, the words are: وَإِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّىءُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ (٣: ١٢١) (and when you left your house to position the Muslims in their battle-posts,

11. And We made the wind subservient to Solomon. He would travel away for a month and return back in a month and We caused a spring of molten brass to flow for him and from among the jinn also made those subservient to him, who would serve him at the behest of his Lord [and for them Our directive would be:] he among them who disobeys Our directives, We will make him taste the torment of Hell.

(3:121)). Similarly, while explaining the entry راح, the author of *Aqrab al-mawārid* writes: و قد يستعمل لمطلق المضي و الذهاب (this word is also used merely to mean: to come and to go).[12]

It is evident from these details that subjugation of winds does not refer merely to their subjugation, the purpose is to point to the majesty of the naval fleet of Solomon (sws). It is exactly in line with what was said for David (sws) earlier: thus when it was mentioned that that iron was softened for him, the purpose was to point to his weaponry and military might. At another instance, an explanation to this is proffered in these words: وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُم مِّن بَأْسِكُمْ (٢١: ٨٠) (And We taught him the art of such attires which could protect you in your wars, (21:80)). I have also alluded to the extent and might of his naval fleet in Sūrah Anbiyā'.

The word قِطْرِ in وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ means brass. The role it has played in the development of civilizations needs no elaboration. A study of the history of those times reveals that in the era of Solomon (sws) large reserves of brass were discovered and he efficiently used them in the construction and advancement of the society. It is evident from the verse, that brass was found in molten form and then after drying it was put to various uses. The huge cauldrons and troughs mentioned ahead were obviously made from this brass. It is evident from history, that in the construction of the Temple also, Solomon (sws) used this metal. Just as today, fountains of oil have been made to flow by God, in the times of Solomon (sws) fountains of brass were made to flow by Him. Each and every treasure of the earth discovered in the past or has been discovered today or will be discovered in the future owes its discovery to God's guidance. People who have insight know that the real source of all this is God; however, people whose eyes have been dazzled by science think that they are its source.

Consider next the section of the verse: وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ. It has already been mentioned in Sūrah Naml that God had blessed Solomon (sws) with a discipline through which he would control rebellious jinn and used them to accomplish certain tasks. It is evident from the verse under discussion that these jinn were not directly under the control of Solomon (sws); in fact, they would obey him on God's bidding and if anyone of them disobeyed God, he would be punished by God, as is evident from the next words of the verse: وَمَن يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (He among them who disobeys Our directives, We

12. Sa'īd al-Khūrī al-Shartūnī, *Aqrab al-mawārid fī fuṣaḥi al-'arabiyyah wa al-shawārid*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Tehrān: Dār al-uswah, 1416 AH), 451.

will make him taste the torment of Hell.). Some people think that the word jinn refers to gigantic and powerful men. However, this view is not correct because it is clearly mentioned in Sūrah Naml that the army of Solomon (sws) consisted of the jinn, human beings and birds: وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ وَالطَّيْرِ (٢٧: ١٧) (And for the inspection of Solomon (sws), his army consisting of the jinn, human beings and birds was gathered, (27:17)). If jinn implied human beings, then there was no need of mentioning the jinn here separately.

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاء مِن مَّحَارِيبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَاتٍ اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ (١٣)[13]

This verse mentions details of the errands on which Solomon (sws) would employ the jinn. Some of these errands relate to construction while others fulfill cultural and welfare needs. When in their days of decadence the Jews were afflicted with base and occult disciplines, they ascribed these nonsensical things to Solomon (sws). Here the Qur'ān has specified that the discipline through which he subjugated the jinn was given to him especially by God out of His grace. It had nothing to do with base or occult disciplines and whatever tasks he assigned to the jinn were all related to construction and other needs of the society; never did he use them for any evil purpose. This has been explained in detail in verse 101 of Sūrah Baqarah.

The words مَّحَارِيبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ refer to the fact that Solomon (sws) would employ the jinn to make *maḥārīb* and *tamāsīl*. The word *miḥrāb*, in my opinion, is used in its common meaning because arches are the most prominent structure of a building that foremost come to the notice of an onlooker. Hence the art of construction is the most visible in them. Among the buildings made by Solomon (sws), the details of how the Temple and the palace were constructed are found in the Bible. It is evident from this that the arches were constructed in the most exquisite manner. Patterns of beautiful flowers were made on them.

The word تَمَاثِيلَ is the plural of تمثال which refers to the portrait of something or its carved form or its portrait or its statue or sculpture. It can be of non-living things like seas, mountains, trees, bushes and flowers etc and can also be of a real or hypothetical living being like human beings, angels, the jinn and animals etc. It is evident from the

13. They would make for him whatever he pleased: arches, statues, basins as large as watering-troughs, and stationed cauldrons – "Be grateful! House of David." And few among My servants are grateful.

Bible that Solomon (sws) built both these types of تَمَاثِيلَ. For example, where his palace is mentioned, the words are:

> On the panels between the uprights were lions, bulls and cherubim. (1 Kings, 7:29)

Similarly, where the construction of the Temple is referred to, the words are:

> For the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim out of olive wood, each ten cubits high. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits. (1 Kings, 7:23-24)

> The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with gourds and open flowers. (1 Kings, 6:18)

> He also covered the floors of both the inner and outer rooms of the temple with gold. (1 Kings, 6:30)

As for the pictures and statues of non-living things, there is no difference of opinion in they being allowed, however, it can be grasped as to how Solomon (sws) regarded the statues and sculptures of living beings as allowed. If the answer to this question is the one given by our exegetes that these things were allowed in the *sharī'ah* of the Israelites, then this is based on their ignorance from the Torah. A clear prohibition of these things is mentioned in the Torah. Thus it is stated:

> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. (Exodus, 20:2-5)

It can clearly be seen here that there exists a prohibition of making a picture or a statue. Hence it is incorrect to believe that these things were not forbidden in previous *sharī'ahs*. And one can also not think that Solomon (sws) would have violated any directive found in the Torah. For this reason, my opinion is that he would have made only those pictures and statues which related to art alone and did not possess any religious sanctity whatsoever; however, when idol worship found itself among the Jews, such things must have been made by kings and to give

religious sanction to them they must have ascribed them to Solomon (sws). It has already been shown in the exegesis of Sūrah Baqarah that the Jews had attributed the invention of base disciplines to Solomon (sws) as well. A refutation had been made of this view there. Similar nonsensical things have been ascribed to him in the Book of Kings. It should remain in consideration that the Jews have not presented Solomon (sws) as a prophet of God but as a materialistic king and have tried to smear every aspect of his character.

In the expression وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَاتٍ the word جِفَانٍ is the plural of جفنة. It means basins and large plates and the word جوابية is the plural of جابية and means watering-troughs. The word رَاسِيَات is an adjective used for mountains. Here it is used for huge cauldrons which would be so heavy that it would not be easy to take them from one place to another. They would be generally fixed at one place over hearths and fire places and a very large quantity of food would be cooked in them at the same time.

In the earlier section of the verse, it was depicted how art flourished in the time of Solomon (sws). In this section of the verse, his generosity and munificence are alluded to. The jinn would make huge basins as large as watering-troughs for him and heavy cauldrons which would be stationed at one place. These details signify Solomon's generosity, If the bigheartedness and munificence of a person needs to be highlighted, only two words in Arabic are sufficient of this: لَهُ قُدُورٌ رَاسِيَاتٌ. It is this metaphor which classical Arab poets use for their generous people like Ḥatim al-Ṭā'ī (d. 578 AH).

It is evident from this that the culture and civilization founded by Solomon (sws) did not merely have the shine of art, and science in it, it was also marked with generosity and kindness for the deprived. It is for this reason that the Almighty has praised his endeavour in this regard. A society in which both these aspects simultaneously exist is a blessed one. On the other hand, a society which has the grandeur of art in it but in which the poor suffer is a fiendish society.

The words اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا express the obligation to God's favours and blessings on Solomon (sws). He was told that he should not be led away from the path of righteousness after receiving the gifts of science and art and all other wonders; on the contrary, he should show gratitude and use each gift in the right manner and place. This advice, in general, emanates from the very existence of a favour of God; however, since Solomon (sws) was a prophet of God, he was given this advice through divine revelation. This is mentioned repeatedly in both the Psalms and the book of Proverbs. Here the address found in the expression آلَ دَاوُودَ is meant to remind Solomon (sws), his family and his followers to follow

his father in thanking God. This is because he has actually inherited all these favours and all this grandeur from him, and his father was given all this by the Almighty as a reward for his gratefulness.

The words وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ express a note of caution and a very important one: this path is not easy to tread; it is fraught with danger. God blesses many with His favours but few are thankful to Him; most people after receiving these favours become disobedient and rebellious. From here, one can gather a very important point of the philosophy of religion: among the trials of patience and gratitude, the trial of gratitude is more difficult. The sayings of Jesus (sws) also corroborate this fact. He has explained this reality in the following words: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew, 19:24)

فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَن لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (١٤)[14]

The previous verses have totally refuted those who were afflicted with the wrong notion that all of Solomon's achievements were, God forbid, dependent on the jinn. Now in this verse, it is further pointed out that the jinn have no means to know the matters of the unseen. They have no information about them just as other creatures of God have no information about them. In order to clarify this point, the incident of Solomon's death is referred to. At the time of his death, he was overseeing the tasks he had assigned to the jinn but the latter never came to know of it. They continued to work in forced labour. Finally, after a long time they came to know that Solomon (sws) had died. It was then that they were able to secure freedom from his slavery.

The whole incident seems to have happened like this: at the time of his death, Solomon (sws) was personally supervising important tasks especially the ones he had assigned to the jinn. Thus he was overseeing some construction work while leaning on his walking stick when death overtook him. However, he continued to stand on the support of his stick and the jinn continued with their work thinking that Solomon (sws) was watching them. Considerable time elapsed during which termite ate his stick from below after which his body fell to the ground.

14. Thus when We had decreed his death none except a worm who would eat away his stick informed them of his death. So when he fell down, only then did the jinn realized that had they knowledge of the unknown, they would not have remained in this humiliating scourge.

The occasion and context in which the expression دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ occurs shows that the reference is to termite. The word مِنسَأَة means "stick." The verse does not mention the duration for which Solomon (sws) remained in this state. However, neither is it improbable that his dead body remained in this position for sometime nor is it improbable that termite ate away part of his stick. Termites are very vicious insects and are capable of eating away wood in a very short time especially if they are large in number. Sticks and staffs are easy prey for them. Moreover, the nature of the incident in this case was very special. It was the will of God that the death of Solomon (sws) take place in such a manner that it becomes evident to people that the wind and the jinn who were under his control were not able to save him from this sudden death. The incident should also happen in a way that the wrong notion of jinn that they [–the Jinn–] know or can know the matters of the unknown. In order to explain these facts, the Almighty gave death to Solomon (sws) in this manner. And God can do whatever He wants to accomplish a task He intends to realize.

The words تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَن لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ allude to the fact that the mischievous jinn would be continuously be on the look out to eavesdrop on the matters of the unseen world (*al-ghayb*), and for this purpose they would sit in various stations in the heavens, as is evident from Sūrah Jinn and from various other places in the Qur'ān. They had successfully bluffed human beings who had been lured away by them that they had the means to be aware of the secrets of the unknown. However, the incident of Solomon's death was enough to open their eyes; they were not even able to have knowledge of something that was so close by, what to speak of the secrets of the heavens. As a result of this lack of knowledge, they had to continue with their humiliating punishment of subjugation.

It is also evident from the above words that Solomon (sws) had only subjected mischievous jinn to forced labour and that his knowledge of subjugation related to them only.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ (١٥)[15]

The people of Sabā' have already been mentioned in verse 22 of Sūrah

15. And for the natives of Sheba also, there was a great sign in their dwelling-place: rows of orchards both on their left and on their right. "Benefit from the sustenance of your Lord and be grateful to Him." Luxuriant and fertile land and forgiving is your Lord.

Naml. They inhabited the area now called Yemen. It was a very fertile and lush land. A series of luxuriant orchards marked the borders of its main highway. These orchards were found all over their territory as well. However, these people did not give due regard to this blessing of God. As a retribution for this ingratitude, the Almighty sent a flood to then which destroyed the whole country. Earlier, the characters of David (sws) and Solomon (sws) were presented as grateful servants of God. Here in this verse the fate of ungrateful people is depicted. In verses 112-113 also, the Quraysh are asked to seek a lesson from the exemplary fate they met.

Consider the words: لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ. The word سَبَإ refers to the people of Sabā'. The word مَسْكَنِ here means "territory" or "land." The word آيَةٌ is not defined by an *alif lām* to portray its majesty and magnitude. The implication is that for the people of Sabā' existed a great sign of God's mercy and providence as well as of his blessings and favours. However, they did not give it due importance and also did not learn the lesson that was meant to be learnt from it.

The words جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ explain this sign: a series of orchards existed on both their both sides ie left and right. It is evident from this that their main highway passed through the centre of their territory, and on both sides of this highway was a succession of orchards. The word جَنَّتَانِ here does not mean two "orchards." It means "two lines of orchards." Such usage of a dual noun are found in Arabic and here concomitant factors points to this usage of the word.

The words كُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ state the lesson that can be learnt from this great sign of God and which should have been learnt from the people of Sabā'. These manifestations of advancement and grandeur by their very existence are calling out that people should benefit from these blessings of God and show gratitude to Him.

The word طَيِّبَةٌ in بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ means "lush and fertile." It is used in this meaning at many places in the Qur'ān. The lesson people have been told to learn in the previous part of the verse is extended here. If they observe their land with deep insight they will come to know that the Lord who has provided them with abundant and ample blessings is very Forgiving and Merciful. Even though they did not deserve it and in spite of their ungratefulness He has richly provided them. I have been pointing at various instances of this exegesis that expressing gratitude to someone who confers favours and blessings is an obvious requirement of human nature. A person who is devoid of this awareness is worse than an animal.

فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُم بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَى أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ (١٦)[16]

Some lexicographers are of the opinion that the word عَرِم means "pounding rain" and others say that it is the plural of عَرِمَة which refers to stones gathered in many layers one over the other. From here it came to be used as a structure or bulwark erected in a valley to stop water. It is stated in *Aqrab al-mawārid*: سد يعترض به الوادي (a dam that is constructed in the middle of a valley).[17] Mangla and Tarbela dams are its examples in Pakistan. It is evident from history that the people of Sabā' had a very long and wide dam which would protect them from the danger of floods and also irrigate their lands when needed. It is named Sadd-i Ma'ārib. Ma'ārib was the capital of Sabā', It was probably destroyed in 542 AD as a result of which the whole country was destroyed.

The words فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ express the fact that after receiving God's favour instead of becoming thankful to Him they became arrogant. It is evident from verse 113 of Sūrah Naḥl that the Almighty sent a messenger to them to warn them but they showed indifference to him. Finally, the torment of God came upon them in the form of a huge flood and destroyed this dam which routed their whole land.

In the section وَبَدَّلْنَاهُم بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَى أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ the word خَمْط means bitter and having a bad taste. In other words, this storm ravaged them in such a manner that the lush and luxuriant orchards were turned into some trees having bitter fruit and some bushes of lotus. It is evident from these details that the flood not only destroyed their whole territory but also was instrumental in depositing a layer of mud or sand on it which changed the nature of the trees which remained and the whole land grew wild bushes and shrubs.

ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا الْكَفُورَ (١٧)[18]

The word مجازات means "to give return." A return can be both good and bad. Hence it is the context which determines which meaning is implied at an instance. Here the occasion shows that a bad return is meant. In

16. Then they disobeyed; so We let loose upon them the waters of the dam and replaced their gardens by two others bearing insipid fruit, tamarisks, and a few Lote-trees.

17. Sa'īd al-Khūrī al-Shartūnī, *Aqrab al-mawārid*, vol. 3, 532.

18. Thus did We punish them for their ingratitude; and We badly punish none but the ungrateful.

other words, the verse would mean: "We gave them this punishment because of their ungrateful attitude, and such punishments We give to none except the ungrateful."

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ (١٨)[19]

The words الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا refer to Syria and its nearby countries with whom the people of Sabā' had trade relations. These countries were very fertile. That is why the adjectival phrase بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا is used for them. Trade relations with countries which are fertile are a source of income and riches.

The expression قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً refers to cities and dwellings which were situated on the highway on both sides of which were a series of orchards. In other words, besides cities which were situated inland there were cities situated at appropriate distances on this highway also where caravans could stop. They could stop here without any danger and take rest before moving on.

The words وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ imply that these dwellings were at such appropriate distances from one another as if the Almighty Himself had set their distances.

The words سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ depict what these favours of God call out through their very existence. It is as if after making all these elaborate arrangements for them, providence had erected a placard for them at regular intervals on which was written that all this arrangement has been done for them so they could travel during the day as well as the night without any fear. Words to the effect: "and remain grateful to the Lord Who has made all these arrangements," are suppressed. The reason why they are suppressed is that every favour entails gratitude and this is already mentioned in verse 15 earlier. For this reason, instead of repeating it, the next verse (ie. verse 19) portrays their attitude which deprived them of these favours.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the Almighty has ascribed all these favours and riches directly to Himself. This is actually a statement of fact that whatever a person gains in this world is because of God's grace; however, because of his ungratefulness, he thinks that whatever he has is because of his own planning. It is this lack of insight which is the reason

19. And between them and the cities that We have blessed, We populated roadside settlements and measured out distances of travel between them. "Travel through them by night and day in safety."

for man's drifting away from the right path. Scientific inventions have also enhanced this conceit so much that only God can now remove it.

فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (١٩)[20]

These words are not uttered by them; they in fact portray what emanates from their very existence. The attitude they adopted after being blessed with so many favours showed that they did not deserve them; they in fact deserve that their settlements be ruined and their journeys became difficult for them and that all their favours be confiscated from them. Several examples of such portrayal of situations have passed by in previous *sūrahs*. It has been explained earlier that the real evidence is that of the situation and not what is uttered by words. The words of the Jews cited by the Qur'ān (٢: ٩٣) قَالُواْ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا (They said: we listened and we disobeyed, (2: 93)) are also a portrayal of their situation and are not verbal utterances.

The words وَظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ imply that they were ungrateful to God and were disobedient to Him and in this way wronged their own souls and invited the wrath of God. They could not harm God in any way.

The words فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ state the consequence of their ungratefulness. They were routed and ravaged and ultimately became a tale of the past.

The words وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ refer to the fact that whoever remained after the flood struck them were scattered here and there because the economy of the country was destroyed. Some went hither and some thither.

Consider now the next part: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ. Earlier just as in verse 17 the real lesson that needed to be learned from this account was referred to by the words وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا الْكَفُورَ (and such punishments We give only to the ungrateful), precisely the same lesson it alluded to here by these words. A little deliberation shows that the account of the people of Sabā' is repeated here twice. First after mentioning the fertility and luxuriance of their land, their ungratefulness and its consequence are alluded to and second after referring to their social development and advancement in trading their dispersion and scattering about as a consequence of their ungratefulness. This style has been adopted so that the real purpose for which this account is narrated does not disappear from the eyes. Several examples of this subtle style exist in the Qur'ān.

20. Thus they said: "Lord! Distance us from our journeys." And they sinned against their souls; so We made them a tale of the ancients and totally routed them. Indeed, there are signs in it for every steadfast, thankful person.

Patience and gratitude are counterparts to one another. They are needed simultaneously. Those who do not have patience in them cannot be expected to be grateful as one must be and those who are not grateful cannot be patient. In the test people are put through in this world, a person is tried at every step to check his patience and gratitude. It is on this trial that his success or failure in the Hereafter is based. The verse says that in this account there are many signs for the patient and grateful. For example:

– Whatever favours a person enjoys in this world are granted by God; hence instead of becoming arrogant, he should remain grateful to God and obedient to Him.

– Whatever favours a person receives is not because he is entitled to them but because he will be tried and tested on their basis. God wants to see whether a person becomes grateful or ungrateful on receiving them.

– Nations who fail in this test encounter the consequence of this failure in their collective capacity in this world and in the Hereafter each person will encounter its consequences in his individual capacity.

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٠)[21]

The view and opinion of Iblīs referred to by this verse is the one he had expressed before the Almighty when he was directed to bow down before Adam (sws) and he had not complied with this command. At that time, while addressing God, he had said that he will lure the progeny of Adam (sws) in such a way that a majority of them will follow him instead of God. The words in Sūrah A'rāf are: وَلاَ تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ (٧: ١٧) (And you will find most of them ungrateful to You, (7:17)). The reason of mentioning this promise of Iblīs here is to point to the fate he will meet: when these people proved that the view of Iblīs about them came true, then their fate will also necessarily come before them in this world and the next: in this world they were consigned to the torment of the flood and in the next they will be thrown into Hell. Where the above mentioned threat of Iblīs is stated in the Qur'ān, right after it the response of God is also mentioned: لَّمَن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لأَمْلأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٧: ١٨) (Those who follow you, I will fill [the belly of] Hell with all of you, (11:119)).

Consider next the part: إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. I have stated while explaining verse 113 of Sūrah Naḥl that the Almighty had sent a messenger to the people of Sabā'. It is evident from the verse under discussion that their majority denied this messenger. Very few people professed faith in him, and only they remained secure from the

21. And Satan made his view about them come true. So they followed him except for a group of believers. And he had no power over them.

punishment which visited the whole nation.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ وَرَبُّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ (٢١)[22]

This verse is meant to dispel a doubt forthwith: no one should be led to believe that Satan has any authority over people so that he can lead astray anyone he wants to. The verse says that he does not have any such authority. The only option he has is to invite people to vice and this respite has been given to him so that God can test people as to who among them has a faith strong enough that keeps that person on the right path in spite of all the luring of Satan, and who among them is inflicted with doubts and led away by Satan. A verb to the effect أنظرناه (We gave him respite) or أمهلناه (We gave him respite) is suppressed before لِنَعْلَمَ and examples of such oppression can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*.

The words وَرَبُّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ imply that after sending mankind and Satan to face this test, He has not detached Himself from their affairs; in fact, He is looking after everything. It is not possible that Satan exceed his bounds or that the invocations of human beings go unanswered. If a person fulfills His obligation to the best of his ability God will help in this world and will also richly reward all his deeds. It is evident from this that people should not desist from their obligation by being overcome with the despair of dominance by Satan and his progeny. God has indeed given respite to Satan; however, He has not consigned the world to him. On the contrary, He is guarding all matters.

Section III: Verses (22-27)

It is evident from the previous verses that mercy and punishment are in the hands of God. For this reason He alone deserves to be worshipped and shown gratitude to. In the succeeding verses, the Idolaters are challenged regarding their deities whom they regarded to be partners of God and in whom they had pinned their hopes to escape God's grasp. They are asked that if they have any argument in favour of these deities, they should bring it forth. At the same time, it is declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that if they do not have any argument in

22. Our only aim was to distinguish those who had conviction in the Hereafter from those who were in doubt about it and Your Lord is watching over everything.

support of their claim and it is only based on obduracy and arrogance, then wasting time on them is fruitless and their matter shall be consigned to God. He is the best of judges. Readers may proceed to study the forthcoming verses in the light of this background.

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُم مِّن ظَهِيرٍ (٢٢) وَلَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِندَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ حَتَّى إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ (٢٣) قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلِ اللهُ وَإِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَى هُدًى أَوْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٤) قُل لَّا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا أَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْأَلُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٥) قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ (٢٦) قُلْ أَرُونِيَ الَّذِينَ أَلْحَقْتُم بِهِ شُرَكَاء كَلَّا بَلْ هُوَ اللهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٧)

Say: "Call on those whom you deify besides God. They have not the slightest authority in the heavens and the earth. Neither is there anyone who is His partner in them nor is there anyone from them who can help Him." And no intercession will be of any use before Him except for whom He permits. Until when fear is banished from their hearts, they will ask: "What has your Lord directed?" "The Truth," they will reply. "And He is the most High, the Great One." (23)

Ask them: "Who can provide for you from the heavens and the earth?" Say: "God. And either one among us is rightly guided or is in open error." Say: "You are not accountable for our crimes, nor are we accountable for your deeds." Say: "Our Lord will gather us all together; then He will judge between us with complete fairness and it is He Who decides and is All-knowing." (24-26)

Say: "Show me those whom you have associated with Him. By no means! In fact, He is the Mighty, the Wise." (27)

Explanation

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُم مِّن ظَهِيرٍ (٢٢)[23]

This is an open challenge thrown to the Idolaters; they should bring

23. Say: "Call on those whom you deify besides God. They have not the slightest authority in the heavens and the earth. Neither is there anyone who is His partner in them nor is there anyone from them who can help Him.

forth in the open those whom they associate with God so that it can be seen who and what are they. Such a challenge is given to the addressees when their claim is totally baseless and the truth has been conclusively conveyed to him in all respects. Precisely this very style is adopted ahead in verse 27 thus: قُلْ أَرُونِيَ الَّذِينَ أَلْحَقْتُم بِهِ شُرَكَاء كَلَّا بَلْ هُوَ اللهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٧). Say: "Show me those whom you have associated with Him. By no means! He is the Mighty, the Wise." (34:27). The words لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ further explain this challenge: the Idolaters ascribe partners to God whereas they have not the slightest of authority in the heavens and the earth. In the first verse of this *sūrah*, this very subject is stated by the words: لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ (Whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him).

The words وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِن شِرْكٍ imply that these deities have no share in the creation of the heavens and the earth. At another place, the words are: مَا أَشْهَدتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (١٨: ٥١) (I did not call any of them while creating the heavens and the earth that they should help me in the slightest way, (18:51)).

The words وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُم مِّن ظَهِيرٍ imply that God has also not sought help from these deities in governing the affairs of the heavens and the earth. He alone is solely running these affairs, and this does not burden him at all. This is a refutation of the notion held by the Idolaters that since the earth is a far off area from Him, hence He must have asked His partners to govern them.

وَلَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِندَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ حَتَّى إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ (٢٣)[24]

After negating the authority of the deities, this verse refutes the concept of intercession of the Idolaters. They are told that if they are happily depending on the intercession of their deities, they must know that no one's intercession will have any weight before God except for whom He allows. In other words, no one will dare intercede without God's permission. Then even after this permission he will be able to intercede for only the person he has been allowed to. He will not be able to open his mouth for any person for whom he has not been granted permission. At other instances in the Qur'ān, it has been stated that

24. And no intercession will be of any use before Him except for whom He permits. Until when fear is banished from their hearts, they will ask: "What has your Lord directed?" "The Truth," they will reply. "And He is the most High, the Great One."

whatever such an intercessor will say will be the truth. No one will be able to state a falsehood as truth before God nor will he be able to utter anything which is contrary to the truth.

The verse under discussion in fact refutes the view of the Idolaters held about the angels they worshipped that they are daughters of God and hence they can convince their father in favour of anything they want to and God in return will listen to them out of His love and affection for them.

Consider next the section: حَتَّى إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقَّ. The real meaning of the word تفزيع is to strike fear; however, when it is used with the preposition عَن it means "to eliminate fear." Thus the expression فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ would mean: "fear would be exterminated from their hearts." These words actually portray the situation the angels will face on the Day of Judgement: like all other creatures they too will be struck with dread and fear so that they will not even know what verdict has been passed by the Almighty regarding people – what to speak of cajoling the Almighty in favour of their intercession. When this dread is purged from their hearts, they will ask others: "What has been ordered by your Lord?" The reply will be whatever has been ordered is the truth in its entirety.

While refuting this very notion of the Idolaters about the angels, the words used in Sūrah Zumar are:

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاء اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُم قِيَامٌ يَنظُرُونَ (٣٩: ٦٧-٦٨)

And these people did not give due importance to God's majesty. And on the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens also will be folded in His hand. Glorious and exalted is He above the things they associate with Him. And when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and on earth shall fall down unconscious except those who shall be spared by God. Then when the trumpet is blown again, they shall suddenly rise and gaze around them. (39: 67-68)

These details relate to what will ensue on the Day of Judgement. Their true nature cannot be comprehended in this world but both these verses are of the same occasion and context. Hence if the verse under discussion is understood in the light of the Sūrah Zumar verses cited

above, it becomes evident that when the trumpet is sounded for the first time all creatures of heavens and the earth will fall down unconscious. Only those people will be secure from this who are kept secure by God. Such people are mentioned thus in the Qur'ān: لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الفَزَعُ الأَكْبَرُ (۲۱: ۱۰۳) (They will not be afflicted by the grief of the greatest horror, (21:103)). When the trumpet is sounded for the second time, everyone will get up and will look around terrified at what has happened and what is going to happen. It seems that it will be at this stage that the angels will ask the question stated in the verse as: مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ (what did your Lord say?) Evident from this question is the fear and dread that they will be overcome with. Thus they will themselves be dumbstruck at the situation, what to speak of taking the initiative in interceding for someone. They will ask others to find out what directive has been given by the Almighty. The reply they will get from others will merely be that whatever directive has been given is absolutely correct. The word الْحَقَّ is in the accusative because of a suppressed verb. The reply can possibly be from two people. It can be from those whose final fate will be settled on that day because on that day the truth will become evident to such an extent that no one will dare say that he has faced injustice. The reply can also be from people who were held secure from the horror of that day and who are referred to by the words إِلَّا مَن شَاء اللهُ (except what God intends) in the above cited verses of Sūrah Zumar. If this second option is accepted, it would mean that the majority would entirely be occupied in thinking of their own selves on that day and thus have no time for any intercession, while those who will be protected by the horror of that day by the Almighty will cry our that whatever verdict has been given by God is correct. In other words, if this is the situation, then who are the ones the Idolaters are depending for intercession.

The words وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ state that exalted and lofty, majestic and powerful is the person of God. No one can dare open his tongue before Him without His permission nor does anyone have the caliber to access Him.

Among angels, Gabriel occupies the highest status before God; yet he too is helpless in accessing God's presence:

اگر یک سر موئے برتر پرم

فروغ تجلی بسوزد پرم

(If his wings advance forward by even the measure of a hair they will get burnt because of the intensity of divine disclosures.)

Further discussion on this issue will be found in the next *sūrah*.

قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلِ اللهُ وَإِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَى هُدًى أَوْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٤)[25]

The verse poses the questions to them: Who in the heavens and the earth gives livelihood to them? Who sends down rain from the sky and causes various seasons? Who makes the seeds and crops they sow to grow and develop and who makes the vegetation lush green?

The words قُلِ اللهُ state that the answer to all these questions is that it is God Who does all this and this harmony between the heavens and the earth is clear evidence of the fact that they are under the control of a single powerful and mighty being.

The reason that the answer has been given by God Himself is that the addressees do not have any option to differ from this answer. It has already been explained at various places in this exegesis that the Idolaters of Makkah never regarded any of their deities to be the creator or provider; they only regarded them as intercessors and a means to procure the nearness of God. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that if they are asked who provides them from the heavens and the earth, they will immediately reply that God does. Since this established reality was acknowledged by the addressees, hence it is stated here for this very reason.

The words وَإِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَى هُدًى أَوْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ imply that the basic message of the Prophet (sws) is what is just stated above as an established reality. If the addressees are disputing this reality, then there is no need for any further discussion or argument; either the Prophet (sws) and his companions are rightly guided and these addressees have strayed or it is the other way round. In other words, if merely because of stubbornness they have reached this extent in their unbecoming behaviour that at one instant they accept a reality and at the very next deny it, then further discussion is useless. Their matter now rests with God. He will decide who is on the right path and who has gone astray. In my opinion, this is a statement of acquittal from the Prophet (sws) and not an expression of tolerance, as is generally understood.

25. Ask them: "Who can provide for you from the heavens and the earth?" Say: "God. And either one among us is rightly guided or is in open error."

قُل لَّا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا أَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْأَلُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٥)[26]

This verse expresses in another way the declaration of acquittal sounded in the previous verse. The Prophet (sws) is told to ask his addressees that if they think that the Prophet (sws) and his companions are guilty of opposing their deities and age-old rituals, then he and his companions are prepared to be held accountable for this. Similarly, his addressees will be accountable for what they are doing and not the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) and his companions were responsible to communicate the truth and they have fulfilled this responsibility; nothing can be gained from any further debate. They should do what they like and the Prophet (sws) and his companions will do what they like. God will decide on the Day of Judgment who is rightly guided and who has been led astray. This topic is also discussed in Sūrah Shūrā in the following words:

لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ (٤٢: ١٥)

Our deeds will be with us and your deeds will be with you; no discussion is now needed among us. (42:15)

In Sūrah Kāfirūn, this proclamation of acquittal is sounded by the words: لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (١٠٩: ٦) (To you your religion and to me mine, (109:6)). In fact, this subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at various instances in different styles and it has a special context and background. The background is that when the addressees try to deny obvious facts because of stubbornness and arrogance, they are told that no room for any discussion is left; they should do what they are doing and the Prophet (sws) and his companions will stick to what they are doing. It may be noted that such verses of the Qur'ān have been generally interpreted to express tolerance and accommodation, yet they do not express tolerance; they portray acquittal and aversion. This wrong interpretation is the result of not taking into view the context and background of such verses.

قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ (٢٦)[27]

The Prophet (sws) is told to tell them that if they are not willing to

26. Say: "You are not accountable for our crimes, nor are we accountable for your deeds."

27. Say: "Our Lord will gather us all together; then He will judge between us with complete fairness and it is He Who decides and is All-knowing."

accept his message and that of his followers, then there is a day that will come in which God will gather both factions and then pass His Judgement with justice. He is the greatest judge; no one has the power to dispute His verdicts, and He has knowledge of all things. Nothing is hidden from Him.

قُلْ أَرُونِيَ الَّذِينَ أَلْحَقْتُم بِهِ شُرَكَاء كَلَّا بَلْ هُوَ اللّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٧)[28]

What is stated in the first verse of the current set of verses is re-iterated here in a different style. Exuding from this style is sarcasm, rebuke and warning. They are dared to show what they worship besides God. They are asked to bring forth these deities who are regarded to be so exalted as to become partners of God.

After posing the question above, God Himself has answered it in the words كَلَّا بَلْ هُوَ اللّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ. Ie., there is no one of this status that he becomes God's partner. God's acknowledged attributes are then cited to bolster this refutation: the attribute الْعَزِيزُ shows that He is inaccessible, dominant and powerful; the attribute الْحَكِيمُ implies that all actions of God are based on great wisdom. Moreover, these attributes are cited with great emphasis signifying that only God is the most powerful and the most wise, and when these attributes are found in Him to perfection, polytheism cannot be linked to them in any way. This is because if someone is regarded as His partner because He is dependent on that partner as far as creating and governing this universe is concerned, then this will negate His attribute of الْعَزِيزُ (Powerful). If on the other hand someone is regarded as His partner considering that the partner because of his closeness and status will able to induce Him to partiality in matters of justice, then this will negate His attribute of الْحَكِيمُ (Wise). Here it may be kept in mind that both these misconceptions were the real cause of the polytheism of the Idolaters. Here the Almighty by referring to both these attributes has severed the roots of both these misconceptions.

Section IV: Verses (28-39)

The succeeding verses deal with the objections and demands which the opponents were making to refute the message of the Qur'ān and the warning it sounded to them. Answers are given to these objections and demands and the fate which these people will necessarily meet is also

28. Say: "Show me those whom you have associated with Him. By no means! In fact, He is the Mighty, the Wise."

alluded to. It is because they are refuting a reality by seeking refuge in these objections and doubts. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨) وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَـٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٩) قُل لَّكُم مِّيعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَّا تَسْتَأْخِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٣٠) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَن نُّؤْمِنَ بِهَـٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لَوْلَا أَنتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٣١) قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا أَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَىٰ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءكُم بَلْ كُنتُم مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣٢) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَن نَّكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَندَادًا وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَغْلَالَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٣) وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٣٤) وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (٣٥) قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٦) وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُم بِالَّتِي تُقَرِّبُكُمْ عِندَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَـٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاء الضِّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَهُمْ فِي الْغُرُفَاتِ آمِنُونَ (٣٧) وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَـٰئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ (٣٨) قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ وَمَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (٣٩)

And We have sent you forth to all mankind so that you may deliver glad tidings and warnings to them but most people are not knowing this fact. And the say: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Tell them: "A specific day is appointed for you from which you will neither hold back the slightest nor come forward." (28-30)

And the disbelievers said: "We will neither believe in this Qur'an nor on what is ahead it is informing us of. And if only you were able to see when these wrongdoers will be made to stand before their Lord! They will be arguing among themselves. Those who were oppressed will tell the arrogant: "But for you, we would certainly have been among the believers." Then the arrogant will reply to the oppressed: "Did we stop you from being guided when it had come to you? In fact, you yourselves

are wrongdoers." The oppressed will say to the arrogant: "It was your conspiracies of day and night [that hindered us from accepting the truth] when you would lure us to disbelieve in God and associate partners with Him." And they will be ashamed in their hearts when they see the torment. And We will enchain the necks of the disbelievers. They shall be rewarded exactly according to their deeds. (31-33)

Whenever We sent a warner in a city, its affluent people said: "We reject the message with which you have been sent." And they said: "We have been given greater wealth and more children than you and we shall never be afflicted with punishment." Tell them: "It is my Lord Who gives abundantly to whom He wants and sparingly to whom He pleases. But most people are not aware of this fact." Neither your wealth nor your children will bring you nearer to Us. Yet those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds will get manifold reward of their deeds and they will live in comfort in tall mansions. (34-37)

And those who strive to refute Our revelations to cause harm are the ones who will be cast into the torment. (38)

Say: "It is my Lord Who gives abundantly to whom He will and sparingly to him [if He pleases] and whatever you spend in charity, He will reward you for it and He is the best of providers." (39)

Explanation

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨)[29]

This verse expresses sorrow at people who in order to reject the message of monotheism of the Qur'ān and its warnings about the punishments of the Herein and the Hereafter would demand that they be shown the promised doom. They would make this demand to harass the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) is told that he has not been sent as one who brings doom and torment to his people; he has been sent as a deliverer of glad tidings and warnings so that he may give good news of salvation and mercy from God to people who after accepting his call profess faith and do righteous deeds; he should also warn those who reject him that God's wrath and anger will necessarily visit them. The Prophet's responsibility ends after he delivers these glad tidings and warnings. It is now up to God whether He punishes these people or not. When the time comes, God will show them this promised doom.

The words وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ are an expression of sorrow at the misfortune of people. Before sending punishment, the Almighty has sent

29. And We have sent you forth to all mankind so that you may deliver glad tidings and warnings to them but most people are not knowing this fact.

a messenger who warns them of this punishment; if they want, people can profess faith and do righteous deeds and thereby obtain a guarantee for eternal mercy. However, such is the misfortune of people that they demand punishment instead of mercy. They are not aware of the fact that when the Almighty sends His messenger to a people, then the truth is conclusively communicated to them. If they now reject it, then as per the established practice of God, they are destroyed. In the next *sūrah*, this fact is delineated in the following words:

إِنْ أَنتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالزُّبُرِ وَبِالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٣٥: ٢٣-٢٦)

You are only a warner. We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. And there is not a single community in which a warner has not come. And if these people reject you, this is nothing new; those before them also rejected. Their messengers came to them with veritable signs, with scriptures, and with a radiant Book. Then I seized these people. So see how My curse on them was! (35: 23-26)

The words كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ of this verse are worthy of consideration. Before Muḥammad (sws), all messengers came as warners to their people however since Muḥammad (sws) is the last of the prophets and messengers, he was sent towards all mankind. The Qur'ān has referred to this fact in various styles and prophecies found in the previous scriptures also highlight this status of Muḥammad (sws). I have already cited them in the exegesis of Sūrah Baqarah. Here, these words are meant to remind the People of the Book. In this phase of Muḥammad's preaching mission, they had started to support the Quraysh. Hence by referring to this aspect, they are informed that the messenger they are opposing in such a vehement manner is not merely a deliverer of glad tidings and warnings to the Quraysh; he will also decide the fate of the People of the Book. Hence if they want to play with danger, they should fully contemplate its consequences.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٩)[30]

The verse implies that instead of paying heed to the warnings of the

30. And the say: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?"

Messenger regarding God's punishment and preparing to save themselves from it, they try to belittle the messenger and his companions. They would sarcastically ask them about the time when this threat of punishment will materialize if they are truthful in their claim. The implication is that either they be shown the punishment or be informed of its time of arrival; otherwise, they will only regard it to be a bluff.

قُل لَّكُم مِّيعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَّا تَسْتَأْخِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٣٠)[31]

The verse directs the Prophet (sws) to respond to their question and tell them that they should not ask to hasten its arrival. A time has been set for it. When it arrives they will neither be able to stand back from it or take a step ahead. It has been explained at several places in this exegesis that God grants ample time to even those who are defiant and rebellious to him so that they are given full opportunity and they are left with no excuse. Only God knows when a people are left with no excuse. Not even His messenger is aware of this secret. The word يَوم here means "time" and the word سَاعَة refers to "seconds" or to some very short span of time. Also concealed in this style of reply is sarcasm to the sarcastic question posed: on what impudence do they inquire about the time of this punishment? When that certain moment comes, no one will be able to avert it.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَن نُّؤْمِنَ بِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لَوْلَا أَنتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٣١)[32]

People have generally interpreted وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ in two ways: one opinion is that this refers to the books revealed before the Qur'ān; the second opinion is that this refers to the divine punishment and Day of Judgement about which the Qur'ān is informing people. In my view, the second opinion is more consistent with the context. In other words, the verse states that these people very stubbornly reply to the warnings of the Qur'ān that they will neither profess belief in this Qur'ān nor are they

31. Tell them: "A specific day is appointed for you from which you will neither hold back the slightest nor come forward."

32. And the disbelievers said: "We will neither believe in this Qur'an nor on what is ahead it is informing us of. And if only you were able to see when these wrongdoers will be made to stand before their Lord! They will be arguing among themselves. Those who were oppressed will tell the arrogant: "But for you, we would certainly have been among the believers."

willing to accept the divine punishment and Day of Judgement it is informing them of. What they meant was that if they are required to believe in such a thing, then they will only do so if they are shown to them. If they cannot be shown to them, then they are not willing to forcibly accept this threat.

The words وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ in الظَّالِمُونَ refer to these very unfortunate people who while disregarding God's mercy were demanding to see His punishment. The answer to the conditional clause is suppressed here as per linguistic principles. This style of suppression is adopted at places where the situation is beyond portrayal and depiction. In other words, what is emphasized is that today these wretched people are daring to deny the Qur'ān and its warnings about the Day of Judgement; however, if you were able to see them when they would stand before their Lord, then …What is suppressed after "then" is so horrific that it cannot be expressed in words.

The words يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلَ mean that they will argue and dispute with one another. Details of this altercation are coming up in the succeeding verses. The implication is that today their leaders and followers are united on opposing the message of the Qur'ān. The leaders are leading the way in this opposition and the followers are vehemently following them; yet when both of them will be presented before God, the followers will hold the leaders responsible for leading them astray and the leaders will rebuke the followers that they themselves are responsible for going astray for they followed their leaders even though the truth had become clear to them. In other words, today the leaders are trying to convince their followers that they should trust them for they will be responsible for what the followers do; similarly, the masses have chosen to blindly follow them thinking that their leaders will protect them from any danger. When the real time comes, each group will know that it is responsible for what it had done; no one will bear the burden of the other.

Consider next the last part of the verse: يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لَوْلَا أَنتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ. These words actually explain what is said earlier. The expression refers to the poor and the common masses who because of their helplessness and weakness were victimized by the rich capitalists. The expression لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا refers to their wealthy capitalist leaders who made their persons the barometer of truth and evil and induced people to follow them and went on to use them for opposing God and His Messenger. The section of the verse under discussion says that on that day the poor and the masses will blame their wealthy leaders that it is because of them that they are meeting this miserable fate and they would have professed faith had these leaders not led them astray. What they

will imply is that the truth was not hidden from them and they also wanted to adopt it yet it was the pressure of the leaders which subdued their urge to accept faith; it was against their desire that they were left bereft of the treasure of faith and had to ultimately reach this fate.

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا أَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَى بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءكُم بَلْ كُنتُم مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣٢)[33]

This verse spells out the answer given by the leaders to their followers. They will reject the blame cast on them that they were responsible for leading the masses astray. They will say that the masses themselves are to be blamed for this because they continued to follow them in spite of the fact the masses had received very clear guidance from God; that truth was neither hidden from them nor from their own selves; in fact, the truth had been conclusively communicated to them by God's Messenger. They will go on to say that had this not happened, they were ready to accept the blame to some extent. However, since they have stumbled in broad daylight, instead of blaming others they should only blame themselves. They will further say that both they and the masses are equal criminals.

Though the statement given in this verse is by the disbelievers, the Qur'ān has cited it as a true statement. It carries a lesson for the masses of all periods of time: no one will be absolved before God merely on the basis that others had led him astray; the quest for the truth is everyone's responsibility and once it becomes evident, it is his obligation to adhere to it as far as is possible for him. No one will be excused before God without undertaking this effort.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَن نَّكْفُرَ بِاللهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَندَادًا وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَغْلَالَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٣)[34]

This verse expresses the rejoinder from the masses. They will say that it is the day and night conspiracies of the leaders that led them astray; a

33. Then the arrogant will reply to the oppressed: "Did we stop you from being guided when it had come to you? In fact, you yourselves are wrongdoers."

34. The oppressed will say to the arrogant: "It was your conspiracies of day and night [that hindered us from accepting the truth] when you would lure us to disbelieve in God and associate partners with Him." And they will be ashamed in their hearts when they see the torment. And We will enchain the necks of the disbelievers. They shall be rewarded exactly according to their deeds.

whole propaganda had been launched by the leaders to lead them away from the message of God's messenger; these leaders had continued to teach and urge them to strongly adhere to disbelief and polytheism. Evident from this answer is the fact that they were fully aware of the truth but they could not follow it because of the perpetual conspiracies of their leaders.

Consider the next the words: وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ. The expression وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ is similar to أبطن العداوة. Feeling ashamed is something that relates to the heart. That is why the verb أَسَرَّ is used with it. The purpose is to express the fact that when after this question and answer they see the torment of God hovering over them, they will feel very ashamed. It is also evident from this part of the verse that their excuse of being led astray by the conspiracies of their leaders will not be acceptable to God; they shall necessarily have to face Hell. The reason for feeling ashamed would be that at that time it will be fully evident to them that they followed their leaders against the calls of their conscience. When the consequences of following something evil against one's conscience come before a person, he is not merely faced with the dire nature of these consequences; he also faces the compunction of his conscience and this doubles his agony. This subject is also discussed in verses 66-68 of Sūrah Aḥzāb. Readers may look up their explanation if more explanation is needed.

The words وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَغْلَالَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا state that God will put yolks around the necks of the disbelievers, and this actually points out to the similarity between an act and its consequence. People who while lulling their intellect and conscience to sleep consign their reins to others will find themselves with yolks around their necks which God would have put to punish them for this wrongdoing. The sentinels of Hell will drag them to Hell through these yolks.

The words هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ imply that the yolks that will be put around the necks of the disbelievers will not constitute any injustice to them. In fact, they will be a manifestation of whatever they did in the previous world. They disobeyed God by putting the yolks of slavery of other people round their necks as a result of which they were enchained by these yolks of Hell.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٣٤)[35]

These words sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that whatever the affluent and rich people of his times are doing to him is nothing new. All

35. Whenever We sent a warner in a city, its affluent people said: "We reject the message with which you have been sent."

such people have behaved in a similar manner in the past with their respective messengers. They too arrogantly told them that they will not accept the message with which they have been sent. In other words, neither are they prepared to accept his message of monotheism nor are they willing to entertain their false threat that if they do not accept faith they will face divine punishment.

Concealed in the linguistic style adopted in the expression أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ is also the fact that the messengerhood claimed by him is merely a claim which has no basis in their eyes.

وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (٣٥)[36]

The verse implies that the argument these affluent people of the past put forward was the same as the people of the Prophet's times are presenting. They told their respective messengers that they have far greater wealth and children. So they must bear in mind this fact while threatening them and alleging that their beliefs and deeds will not please God and that they are worthy of His wrath. The implication is that if the claim of the messengers was true, then these messengers should have been far wealthier and should have possessed more children. A further statement expressed by these affluent people is: وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ: They reckoned that they would neither be punished in this world nor in the Hereafter if ever it comes as per the claim of the messengers. In other words, according to these rich people their state of affluence is belying the threat of the promised doom and making them conclude that the messengers are making false claims.

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٦)[37]

The verse asks the Prophet (sws) to reply to them that in this world the abundance of wealth and children is neither an indication of being God's favoured ones nor a paucity of these sources an indication of being unworthy in His sight. On the contrary, this abundance and paucity is based on God's authority and wisdom. If He grants abundance in the sustenance of some people, then His purpose is to test their gratitude. If he constricts the resources of some people, then His purpose is to try their patience. Real success is based on success in this test which will

36. And they said: "We have been given greater wealth and more children than you and we shall never be afflicted with punishment."

37. Tell them: "It is my Lord Who gives abundantly to whom He wants and sparingly to whom He pleases. But most people are not aware of this fact."

become evident to people in the Hereafter.

The words وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ imply that the majority of people are not aware of this reality. They are overcome by the foolishness that whatever wealth and status they have is the result of their competence and entitlement to it and corroborates that they are favoured ones of God. In this way, they are enticed by Satan and make the favours of God a scourge for themselves.

وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُم بِالَّتِي تُقَرِّبُكُمْ عِندَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَـٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ الضِّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَهُمْ فِي الْغُرُفَاتِ آمِنُونَ (٣٧)[38]

The word زُلْفَىٰ is a verbal noun and is meant to emphasize the verb ie. تقربكم قربة. The implication is that wealth and children are not the things which have even the slightest role in bringing a person close to God. He bestows these things to people to test them whether they become ungrateful to Him after receiving them or adopt the path of true faith and do righteous deeds. Thus what brings a person close to God is faith and good deeds and not wealth and children. In the absence of faith and righteous deeds, wealth and children will only add to the ruin of such people.

Consider next the words: فَأُولَـٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ الضِّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا. In Arabic, the word ضِعْف means the same magnitude of a thing as well as many times the magnitude of a thing however much this may be. Hence, a precise translation of these words would be: "As for those who accept faith and do righteous deeds, they will be rewarded many times for what they did." This "many times reward" is explained at other instances in the Qur'ān, and I have elucidated it an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The word ضِعْف should not be construed as two times or double reward.[39]

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38. Neither your wealth nor your children will bring you nearer to Us. Yet those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds will get manifold reward of their deeds and they will live in comfort in tall mansions.

39. Ibn Manẓūr writes:

و جائز في كلام العرب أن يكون الضعف الواحد و ما زاد عليه من الأمثال يقال لك ضعفه اي مثلاه و ثلاثة أمثال لأنه في الأصل زيادة غير محصورة

In classical Arabic it is perfectly legitimate to regard الضعف as something which is twice or many times more than the original entity. It is said: لك ضعفه. It means something which is double or thrice because in reality it

The clause وَهُمْ فِي الْغُرُفَاتِ آمِنُونَ refers to the fact that in this world danger lurks everywhere for one's wealth and children and no one can protect oneself from these dangers. Yet people who make their wealth and children a means of salvation in the Hereafter will be rewarded with abiding and eternal reward. They will never feel any apprehension in this regard.

وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُوْلَئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ (٣٨)[40]

This is a mention of the fate of those who used their abundance in wealth and children as a means to reject the revelations of God and to harass His Messenger. The verse states that these people will be seized and dragged to the punishment of God so that they bear the punishment of their arrogance. The word مُحْضَرُونَ depicts their state of humiliation and helplessness.

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ وَمَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (٣٩)[41]

The opening words of this verse and those of verse 36 are exactly the same yet their connotation at both places is different. Verse 36 explains that the abundance in sustenance and their scarcity is totally in the hands of God. Hence no one should show arrogance on their abundance nor despair at their scarcity. Each person should try to understand that both these circumstances befall him as per God's wisdom. Through both types of circumstances, He tests the gratitude or patience of His people. In the verse under discussion, the Prophet (sws) is told that he should inform these affluent people that instead of showing arrogance on the blessings and sustenance of God, they should spend them on things which please God and they should rest assured that whatever they spend in the way of God will not go waste; in fact, they will be rewarded for the smallest of amounts they spend in his way. Earlier, the principle of multiple reward (جزاء الضعف) has been stated and also explained. The words فِيْ سَبِيْلِ الله

means something whose multiplicity is not confined. (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 9, 205)

40. And those who strive to refute Our revelations to cause harm are the ones who will be cast into the torment.

41. Say: "It is my Lord Who gives abundantly to whom He will and sparingly to him [if He pleases] and whatever you spend in charity, He will reward you for it and He is the best of providers."

are suppressed after وَمَا أَنفَقْتُم because of contextual indications. The expression أَخْلَفَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ would mean رد عليك ما ذهب (God returned to you what you had lost.)

The expression وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ implies that those who spend in God should rest assured that God is the best provider. Today they cannot even imagine the great recompense they can and will receive tomorrow for the trivial things they may spend in the way of God. The word خَيْرُ (better) here is not meant to express comparison with something. It merely expresses an attribute. This style has been explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

Section V: Verses (40-45)

In the succeeding verses, the affluent are warned on regarding the angels to be deities and worshipping them thinking that they will save them if ever the Hereafter comes. The fact of the matter is that the angels will declare their acquittal from them and that no one will be able to save them; it is a great favour of God to them that He sent them a messenger to inform them but it is their misfortune that they are regarding his words to be sorcery; it is better if they learn a lesson from the previous nations. These nations were much more powerful than them but when God seized them no one was able to give them refuge.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَهَؤُلَاءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٤٠) قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِم بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ (٤١) فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَّفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا وَنَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ (٤٢) وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُرِيدُ أَن يَصُدَّكُمْ عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٤٣) وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُم مِّن كُتُبٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِن نَّذِيرٍ (٤٤) وَكَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا بَلَغُوا مِعْشَارَ مَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلِي فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٤٥)

And remember the day when He gathers them all together. Then He will say to the angels: "Was it you that these people worshipped?" They will reply: "Glory be to You! You are our defender against them! In fact,

they have been worshipping the jinn. Their majority believes in them alone." (40-41)

Thus today none of you will be able to either benefit or inflict loss on one another. And We will say to these wrongdoers: "Taste now the torment of this Hell, which you continued to deny." (42)

And when Our clear revelations are recited to them, they say: "This is but a person who wants to turn you away from the gods your fathers worshipped." And they said: "This is nothing but an invented falsehood." And these disbelievers said about the truth when it came to them: "This is but plain sorcery." And We had not given them scriptures to read, nor have We sent before you anyone to inform them. (44)

And those before them also denied and they could not attain the slightest of what We gave them. So, they denied My messengers; then see how terrible was My curse on them! (45)

Explanation

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَهَؤُلَاءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٤٠)[42]

The emphasis added by the word جَمِيعًا is meant to convey the fact that on the Day of Judgement the disbelievers and idolaters will be gathered together with those who they worshipped or ascribed religious innovations to so that the latter could bear witness against them. The testimony of the prophets of God has already been mentioned in Sūrah Anbiyā'. It is stated there that in the presence of God they will declare their acquittal from all religious innovations their followers had invented. Similarly, the Almighty would gather the angels and inquire from them after pointing to the Idolaters of Arabia whether the claim of these Idolaters to worship them is true. Obviously, this question would be posed to conclusively convey the truth to the Idolaters: those who worshipped were not even aware of this worship; neither did they demand this worship nor were they prepared to tolerate for even a moment that anyone worships them by making them partners of God.

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِم بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ (٤١)[43]

The angels will immediately reply that exalted is God for others to associate partners with Him.

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42. And remember the day when He gathers them all together. He will say to the angels: "Was it you that these people worshipped?"

43. They will reply: "Glory be to You! You are our defender against them! In fact, they have been worshipping the jinn. Their majority believes in them alone."

One thing that is evident from this answer of the angels is that polytheism is such a heinous thing that they will express their hate for it as soon as they hear it and express that God is far loftier than polytheism to be ascribed to them.

The second thing which is evident from their words is that they will regard it to be a vicious allegation on them that some wrongdoers have tried to implicate them in the filth of polytheism.

The third thing which is evident from their words is that the foolish people who have made such allegations are solely responsible for them; angels are far above asking someone to worship them.

The words أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِم of the angels solicit God's help: He is their Lord, helper and protector contrary to these wrongdoers who had tried to incriminate them with this sin. This will be a renunciation on their part and prayer to God to absolve them of this blame. The words مِن دُونِهِم here connote "in opposition."

The words بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ uttered by the angels imply that the claim of the people that they had been worshipping them is totally baseless; yet what is true is that they have in fact been worshipping the jinn. Hence, their majority has professed faith in the jinn.

This answer given by the angels will be totally true. This is because the idols of angels – Lāt, Manāt and 'Uzzā etc – made by them were hypothetical. Such deities never existed. However, through their soothsayers, they remained in contact with the jinn, and since they regarded the jinn to be a means of acquiring the news of the unseen world, they would make offerings and sacrifices for them and also extol them. The words أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ refer to the fact that these people profess faith in the jinn that they will bring to them the news of the unseen world and are able to benefit or harm people of their own accord.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَّفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا وَنَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ (٤٢)[44]

After this answer by the angels, their worshippers will be told that they have openly heard the testimony of the angels they heavily banked upon. So, today no one will be able to be of any benefit to others. Hence, neither will these angels be able to harm or benefit them nor will these worshippers be able to reciprocate this.

44. Thus today none of you will be able to either benefit or inflict loss on one another. And We will say to these wrongdoers: "Taste now the torment of this Hell, which you continued to deny."

The words لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا refer to the polytheists who had associated partners with God without any reason to support this claim and in this way had committed a great wrong (*zulmuṇ 'azīmuṇ*), and when the messenger of God warned them of God's scourge, they rejected it with utter stubbornness. It is after this conclusive communication of the truth will God tell them to taste the scourge which they had been denying.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُرِيدُ أَن يَصُدَّكُمْ عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٤٣)[45]

This verse expresses amazement on the obduracy and arrogance of these people and also expresses sorrow on their misfortune and deprivation. They are trying to besmear the sun. When God's revelations which are lucid and sound and which radiate both the heart and intellect are recited before them, they try to mislead their masses against them by saying that this person wants to lead them away from their deities worshipped by all their forefathers. Reference to forefathers has always remained a potent means in the hands of the miscreants to incite the masses against facts. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that this is perhaps the sole argument which the misguided have always presented in their favour. The statement مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ also reflects their venom. They try to convince their masses they should not be lured by this person (ie Muḥammad (sws)) who is presenting himself as God's messenger. He is an ordinary human being who has falsely posed himself as God's envoy so that he can lead them away from their ancestral religion.

The words وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى reflect their propaganda against the Qur'ān. They try to convince their masses that it is falsely claimed that the Qur'ān has been revealed by God; this false claim has been made to over-awe them. The fact is that it is merely a self-concocted book that has been falsely ascribed to God.

The words وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ express amazement at their nonsensical talk that these people are dilly dallying after the truth has become apparent to them. If the sun has disappeared from the horizon

45. And when Our clear revelations are recited to them, they say: "This is but a person who wants to turn you away from the gods your fathers worshipped." And they said: "This is nothing but an invented falsehood." And these disbelievers said about the truth when it came to them: "This is but plain sorcery."

and an obdurate person asks about it, then this obduracy is not a cause of amazement; however, when the sun is shinning at midday and someone regards this to be magic, then this can only be attributed to his intellectual depravity.

The word حَقِّ in لِلْحَقِّ connotes the Qur'ān and the letter ل connotes في. This use is very common in Arabic. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The words إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ provide the details of their statement that they would regard this Qur'ān to be magic. It has already been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis what they meant by regarding the Qur'ān to be magic: the staunchest of its opponents acknowledged the eloquence and potency of the Qur'ān, but they tried to convince the masses that this eloquence and potency related to the magical style of its presenter; it is not divine in nature.

وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُم مِّن كُتُبٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِن نَّذِيرٍ (٤٤)[46]

This verse expresses favour to the opponents and sorrow at their attitude of not giving due regard to this favour. Before this, neither did the Almighty give them any book which could have guided and instructed them nor prior to Muḥammad (sws) did ever a prophet came to them who could have awoken them from their slumber. Hence, it was only befitting that they should have given due importance to this great favour of God and welcomed it; they could have been well-guided by it in the affairs of this world and also earned the kingdom of the next world. Yet they are opposing it and inviting the wrath of God. As per the established practice of God, His wrath necessarily visits the nation which denies His messenger.

The attribute يَدْرُسُونَهَا which qualifies the word كُتُبٍ points to the fact that till then, these people had not been given divine scriptures like the Israelites so that they could have read and taught them. The guidance given to them through Abraham (sws) was in the form of an oral tradition which was almost forgotten with the passage of time, and a plethora of religious innovations had badly distorted their religion. It was God's intention that by giving them His Book He complete His favour on them. However, it is a pity that these people are regarding it to be magic and fabrication.

46. And We had not given them scriptures to read, nor have We sent before you anyone to inform them.

وَكَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا بَلَغُوا مِعْشَارَ مَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلِي فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٤٥)[47]

This verse sounds a warning to these people: the necessary consequence of denying the messenger and warner of God is that such people are destroyed. The whole annals of mankind bear witness to this established practice of God.

The words وَمَا بَلَغُوا مِعْشَارَ مَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ are an apt warning inserted in the discourse: those nations are being referred to who were far mightier and majestic than the Quraysh; however, when they denied the messenger of God, the manner in which the curse of God manifested on them is mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān. The implication is that if their resources and affluence have made them arrogant, then this has no basis. Just one blow of God was enough to wipe out powerful and mighty nations. So what good are the Quraysh. They are far below in power and might. It is because of their mean nature that they have gone astray even with their meager resources.

Section VI: Verses: (46-54)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah* in which the addressees are very affectionately advised and counseled and also strongly threatened at the same time to mend their ways. If this time passes, it will not come again. At that time, they will regret this; but this will be of no avail. Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعِظُكُم بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَن تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَثْنَى وَفُرَادَى ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِكُم مِّن جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَّكُم بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ (٤٦) قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُم مِّنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللهِ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٤٧) قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (٤٨) قُلْ جَاء الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ (٤٩) قُلْ إِن ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَا أَضِلُّ عَلَى نَفْسِي وَإِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوحِي إِلَيَّ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ (٥٠) وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ فَزِعُوا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَأُخِذُوا مِن مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ (٥١) وَقَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ وَأَنَّى لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِن مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٢) وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِهِ مِن قَبْلُ وَيَقْذِفُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٣) وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ

47. And those before them also denied and they could not attain the slightest of what We gave them. So, they denied My messengers; then see how terrible was My curse on them!

وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِأَشْيَاعِهِم مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مُّرِيبٍ (٥٤)

Tell them: "I counsel you about one thing: stand up in pairs or singly for the sake of God; then reflect. Your companion is not one possessed. He is only a warner of a stern punishment." Say: "If I have asked for any reward from you, it is for you only. My reward rests with God alone. And He is ever-watching everything." (46-47)

Say: "My Lord will strike truth [on falsehood]. He fully knows all the secrets. Say: "Truth has come. Falsehood neither begins nor returns." (48-49)

Say: "If I am in error, then I alone shall bear its evil consequences, and if I am rightly guided, then this is because of the revelation my Lord is sending to me. He hears all and is near at hand." (50)

And if you could only see them when they will be overcome by anxiety. Thus, they will not be able to run away and shall be caught from nearby. And they will say: "We profess faith in it." But how can they acquire it from far away. And before this, they rejected it, and indulged in conjecture from far away, and a wall will distance them from their desires just as the case was with those similar to them earlier. Indeed, they had been inflicted with a perplexing doubt. (51-54)

Explanation

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعِظُكُم بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَن تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَثْنَى وَفُرَادَى ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِكُم مِّن جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَّكُم بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ (٤٦)[48]

It is mentioned in verse 7-8 earlier that when the Prophet (sws) would threaten the arrogant people of his nation of worldly and next-worldly punishment, they would regard him to be a person possessed. They would say that this person is inflicted with hallucinations of punishment everywhere. The Prophet (sws) is told to answer this objection by earnestly asking them to follow an advice. The advice is that while shunning stubbornness, bias and conceit they should stand up in pairs or singly and seriously listen to his message and reflect on it. The word لِلَّهِ is meant to point out to them that till that time they have been guided by their evil desires and Satan and hence they could deliberate on the matter in an unbiased way. However, God has the greatest right on a person, and they too believe in God. So for the sake of God they should stand up afresh to reflect on the actual reality while rising above all vested

48. Tell them: "I counsel you about one thing: stand up in pairs or single for the sake of God; then reflect. Your companion is not one possessed. He is only a warner of a stern punishment."

interests. "Stand up" here refers turning towards God and striving for Him. Though this request will weigh heavily on them in this atmosphere of vested interests but for the sake of God they should tolerate it. This is the right attitude.

The words مَثْنَىٰ وَفُرَادَىٰ direct attention to the fact that mobs are not capable of thinking. Till then, their attitude has been that as soon as the Prophet (sws) would utter anything the miscreants among them would launch a propaganda against him so that no one is able to listen and understand what he has to say. They should now give up this attitude and now come to him singly or in pairs and intently listen to what he has to say to them. They should reflect on what he has to say and discuss their doubts with him and seek their answers from him and then reflect if what he is saying are the words of a person possessed or these words actually portray the fate they shall necessarily meet.

The words مَا بِصَاحِبِكُم مِّن جِنَّةٍ imply that if they seriously reflect, it will become evident that their companion is not inflicted with madness; the fact is that their own intellects are covered with bias and they are trying to harass him by rallying against him in multitudes.

The word صَاحِب refers to the fact that the person they regard as mad and one possessed is not someone new to them: he is someone born and raised among them before their very eyes. In all this time, they saw that he was part of all their virtuous acts and abstained from all their vices. They found him to be *ṣādiq* (truthful) and *amīn* (trustworthy) in every trial and test. They really trusted his insight and wisdom and regarded him to be someone very prudent; but today they are regarding this prudent person as one possessed. They should reflect whether he is possessed or are they possessed.

There is a short pause after تَتَفَكَّرُوا and this pause is very subtle. It is as if after inviting people to reflect they are also given some time for it. After that, the conclusion they should reach after reflection is put forth before them. Several examples of such pauses are found in the Qur'ān.

The words إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَّكُم بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ are very apt. The implication is that they do witness that only one thought and idea infatuate dominates his call and he continues to remind and warn them of this worldly and next worldly punishment at every instant. Moreover, in spite of all their opposition, harassments and oppression, he continues to come to them, then this anxiety of his is not because he is insane. The real reason is that he is seeing with his eyes the punishment which is looming over their heads yet they are not being able to see it. His worry and anxiety springs from his sympathy for them; however, because of their blind frenzy they regard his anxiety to be madness and lunacy.

Here it may be kept in mind that it is not in metaphorical terms that a messenger of God sees the punishment looming over his nation; it is an absolute reality. A messenger is like a cloud of mercy for his nation yet concealed in this cloud is the thunder of punishment as well if his nation rejects him. This worldly punishment is a prelude to the punishment of the Hereafter. For this reason, each messenger has warned his nation of both these punishments and warned them with such conviction as if he is seeing these punishments from his very eyes. Yet people devoid of insight regarded this conviction to be lunacy. The proclamation of *wa ṣabāḥā* made by the Prophet (sws) at the Ṣafā' hill was a manifestation of this very conviction. However, the leaders of the Quraysh instead of paying heed to it made fun of it.

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُم مِّنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللهِ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٤٧)[49]

What is mentioned in the above verse is discussed in the Qur'ān in two ways; yet both have the same purport.

One of them is that the Prophet (sws) it to convey to his addressees that he has not asked any reward of his service so that they are shying away from him as this rests with God alone.

The other one is that the Prophet (sws) is told to communicate to his addressees that if he has requested them to something which they regard to be remuneration and are burdened by it, then this is not for his own self but for their own benefit – both in this world and in the next.

There are several verses which state the first of the above purports. References are not needed. Here, in the verse under discussion, the second of the above purports is implied. Here are a few parallel verses. It is said in Sūrah Furqān:

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِلَّا مَن شَاء أَن يَتَّخِذَ إِلَى رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا (٢٥: ٥٧)

Say: "I have not demanded any reward from you except that whoever wants should adopt the path of His Lord." (25:57)

Though the above verse can be interpreted in the first of the above purports above and this would not be linguistically incorrect as well, yet also evident is the purport that the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell his addressees that he has not desired from them any remuneration for his service. If he has desired anything, it is for them and that is he would like to show the straight path to whoever among them wants to tread the path

49. Say: "If I have asked for any reward from you, it is for you only. My reward rests with God alone. And He is ever-watching everything."

that leads to God.

Similarly, it is stated in Sūrah Shūrā:

قُل لَّا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى (٤٢: ٢٣)

Say: "For this I demand of you no recompense except that be kind to your kin." (42:23)

Though the above verse can be interpreted in the first of the above two purports and we will discuss it in its exegesis, yet the second of the purports is also evident from it. Interpreted thus, it would mean that if the Prophet's addressees regard his invitation to spend in the cause of God and to honour familial ties to be a burden, then he is not doing this for his own self but for them and their relatives and kin.

In this very purport, it is said in the verse under discussion that the Prophet (sws) in the first place has not asked his addressees for any remuneration for his preaching; his reward and remuneration rest with God. However, if they consider any of his demands a burden and regard them as his reward, then this is merely their misconception and wrong understanding. Whatever he has asked from them is for them alone and not for his own self. If he warns them of fearing God and paying heed to the Day of Judgement, urges them to do virtuous deeds, spend in the way of God, feed the orphans and the needy, liberate slaves – then none of these things is of any personal benefit to him. The fact of the matter is that both their individual and collective benefit is for them. If they follow these things, they will succeed both in this world and in the next.

Wherever the above statement is given by the Qur'ān, it is meant to rebuke the addressees and to show aversion to them. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should convey to his addressees who are not giving due importance to his message that he after all has not asked for a ticket or financial support that may be a source of stopping them from coming to him and hearing his message; they can come to him anytime and without any hesitation; there is no restriction on anyone to come to him; his door is open for one and all – whether rich or poor all are warmly welcome. If they do not come, then they should remember that this will harm him the least; they will however harm themselves. It is not that the Prophet (sws) will suffer any loss if they do not come. What he has obtained from God free of cost, he wants to give to others without charging them.

The words وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ imply that the God Who has taken the responsibility of the Prophet's reward is watching over everything; he is quite sure that the smallest of his services will be in God's notice. He is

observing the Prophet's efforts and the ill-ways of his opponents. The Prophet (sws) fully trusts God in rewarding him for his efforts.

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (٤٨)[50]

It is contextually evident that the words عَلَى البَاطِلِ are suppressed after يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ. This is evident from a parallel verse: بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ (٢١: ١٨) (We will smack falsehood with the truth and it will crush out its brain, (21:18))

The verse directs the Prophet (sws) to tell these naïve people that they should not remain in the misconception that this world has been created without a purpose and that it will end without a purpose; a day shall necessarily come when its Creator will pass His verdict between the truth and falsehood that are found in it; He will strike falsehood with the truth crush it to pieces. It may be kept in mind that what is said here primarily relates to the greater court of judgement that will be set up in the Hereafter; however, the same is true for the lesser court of judgement that is set up in this world in the times of God's messengers. It has been explained at many instances in this exegesis that the fate of nations to whom messengers of God are sent are necessarily decided in this world. Consequently, on the day Makkah was conquered, he proclaimed: جَاء الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا (١٧: ٨١) (the truth has arrived and falsehood has been destroyed; indeed, falsehood is meant destined for destruction, (17:81)).

The expression عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ in my opinion is a complete sentence and its inchoative (*mubtadā'*) is suppressed here. It actually affords an argument from the attributes of God in favour of the court of justice that will be decided between truth and falsehood: the Lord of this universe knows everything found in it; nothing is hidden from His eyes. Hence no one should remain in the misconception that the Creator will have any difficulty in deciding matters. He will present each person with his account of deeds. Found in it will be every deed he did however hidden it may have been.

قُلْ جَاء الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ (٤٩)[51]

Just as in the above verse the words عَلَى البَاطِلِ are suppressed after يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ, here the words زَهَقَ البَاطِلْ are suppressed after جَاء الْحَقُّ. This

50. Say: "My Lord will strike truth [on falsehood]. He fully knows all the secrets.

51. Say: "Truth has come. Falsehood neither begins nor returns."

suppression is indicated by the words وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ.

The verse directs the Prophet (sws) to tell his naïve addressees that since the truth has now come to them in the form of the Qur'ān, its arrival has signaled the destruction of falsehood they have been worshipping. If they still continue to cling to it, they too will be ruined.

The words وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ point to the transient nature of falsehood: This world was initiated by its Creator on the truth; hence it is essential that it end on the truth as well. When falsehood had no role in its initiation how can it have any role in its culmination? Hence people who are spending their lives while relying on their hypothetical deities should bear in mind that their deities neither have any authority in initiating a thing nor making it reach its end. It needs to be kept in mind that the idolaters of Arabia would not associate anyone in the creation of this universe; however, they believed that if ever the Hereafter comes, then they shall return to their deities who they worshipped. These deities through intercession before God will win for them a high status there. The Qur'ān has refuted this misconception of theirs at various instances. It asks them that when they do not regard anyone to be God's partner when He started creation and created this universe, why do ascribe partners to Him when He will re-create?

In Sūrah Yūnus, this subject is discussed thus:

إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا وَعْدَ اللهِ حَقًّا إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ (١٠: ٤)

Towards Him shall all of you return. This promise of God is bound to be fulfilled. Indeed, it is He Who begins creation and it is He Who will create again so that He may recompense with fairness those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. (10:4)

Then what is stated above is re-iterated in the following words:

قُلْ هَلْ مِن شُرَكَآئِكُم مَّن يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ قُلِ اللهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ (١٠: ٣٤)

Ask them: "Is there anyone of your deities who begins creation and then will re-create? So how are you deluded away?" (10:34)

قُلْ إِن ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَا أَضِلُّ عَلَى نَفْسِي وَإِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوحِي إِلَيَّ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ (٥٠)[52]

This verse warns these people through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). He should tell them that if he has been led astray as they think, then only he only will bear the consequences and they will remain safe because they are not supporting his stance. However, there is another aspect on which they must deeply reflect: if the Prophet (sws) is rightly guided, then this guidance has been acquired from the revelations which God is sending to him; in this case, denying him should not be an ordinary thing; they will be regarded someone who have denied God's revelations and the fate that such people meet and will meet is no ordinary a matter. The implication is that they should fully contemplate the consequences of this denial.

The words إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ reflect trust in God. In other words, arguing any more with these people is fruitless. The Prophet (sws) has told them that these are the last words which he will convey to them after which he will consign his matter to God. They are neither prepared to listen to what he says nor ready to come near him; yet his Lord listens to him and is also near him. So instead of wasting time with them, he would rather earnestly converse with God who hears and listens.

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ فَزِعُوا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَأُخِذُوا مِن مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ (٥١)[53]

The answer to the conditional clause is suppressed. A similar suppression occurred in verse 31 earlier. The reason for such a suppression is that the answer is beyond expression in words. The implication is that today such is the extent of their arrogance that they are totally unruffled, yet if people could see them when they will be seized by the God's grip they are denying today, they will have some idea of their helplessness: they will show total submission and acknowledge the truth at that time. The verse goes on to state that when these people would be seized by God, they will worriedly try escape from it; yet who has ever been able to save himself from God's grasp? The words وَأُخِذُوا مِن مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ say that they will try to run away but will be caught from nearby. In such a manner will God's torment seize them

52. Say: "If I am in error, then I alone shall bear its evil consequences, and if I am rightly guided, then this is because of the revelation my Lord is sending to me. He hears all and is near at hand."

53. And if you could only see the disbelievers when they will be overcome by anxiety. Thus, they will not be able to run away and shall be caught from nearby.

from above their heads or below their feet that they will not be able to run any where.

وَقَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ وَأَنَّى لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِن مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٢)[54]

The verse implies that at that time they will come out of their state of inebriation and realize what the reality is and they will proclaim faith in the Book of God. The antecedent of the pronoun in بِهِ is the Qur'ān which has been mentioned in earlier verses. Belief in the Prophet who has presented the Qur'ān is automatically implied.

The words وَأَنَّى لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِن مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ imply that the time to accept faith was this world and that too before God's torment visits a people. When God's torment arrives, they will be so far away from their destination of accepting faith that there will be no chance left for them to reach it. Upon seeing God's torment, a person as arrogant as the Pharaoh had expressed his intention to profess faith in the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). Yet the answer that he received from God was: آلآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ (١٠: ٩١) (It is now that you have professed faith; yet when you had the time to accept faith, you showed disobedience, (10: 91))

The word التَّنَاوُشُ means to attain or acquire something and the expression أَنَّى لَهُمُ imply: "what chance is left to acquire it at that time."

دست کوتاه است و خرما بر نخیل

(My hands are short and dates are [high up] on the palm-tree)

وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِهِ مِن قَبْلُ وَيَقْذِفُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٣)[55]

The expression قذف بالحجارة means "to throw stones," and قذف بالقول means to say something without thinking. It is from here that it started to mean رجما بالغيب ie. making a wild guess.

The implication is that they will only believe when they behold the punishment. Earlier they had rashly speculated that this Book is a fabrication; its presenter, God forbid, is an imposter, his threat of punishment is mere bluff and the warning of the Day of Judgement is a product of his insanity. They further contended that if ever the Day of Judgement comes, their deities will secure their dominance there too. In

54. And they will say: "We profess faith in it." But how can they acquire it from far away.

55. And before this, they rejected it, and indulged in conjecture from far away,

short, while disregarding sense and reason, they continued to utter nonsense in frenzy of denying the Qur'ān and His Messenger. Yet when the truth manifests itself before their eyes, they will acknowledge it. However, this acknowledgement will be too late and bear no fruit.

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِأَشْيَاعِهِم مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مُّرِيبٍ (٥٤)[56]

The verse expresses the fact that when the decisive punishment will appear, then a wall will be erected between them and all their desires. They would like to accept faith but it will be futile. They will request for some respite but their call will not be heard. They will invoke their deities, but they too will not respond to them. In short, all doors of hope will be closed on them and they will have to face eternal despair.

The words كَمَا فُعِلَ بِأَشْيَاعِهِم state that these people too will meet the same fate as their likes earlier on. This refers to the people of 'Ād, the Thamūd, Madyan and the Pharaoh etc whose accounts have been related in detail in the Qur'ān. The implication is that there is nothing which has not taken place earlier. History bears witness that all nations met this very calamity who like these people denied the warnings of their respective messenger. If these people do not learn a lesson from these earlier nations, then they too will necessarily meet the same fate.

The words إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مُّرِيبٍ refer to the fact that these earlier nations too were inflicted with a similar baffling doubt until the decisive moment arrived. I have already explained the implications of شَكٍّ مُّرِيبٍ in verse 62 of Sūrah Hūd.

By the help and grace of God, this brings us to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah*. فَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلَىٰ ذَالِك (gratitude be to God for this).

Raḥmānābād
3rd January, 1975
Friday, 9 am

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56. And a wall will distance them from their desires just as the case was with those similar to them earlier. Indeed, they had been inflicted with a perplexing doubt.

Sūrah Fāṭir

Introduction

This *sūrah* forms a pair with Sūrah Sabā', the previous *sūrah*. Hence there is not much difference between the central themes of the two. The subject of Sūrah Fāṭir is monotheism. It begins with an acknowledgement of gratitude to God and refutation of the divinity of the angels. Then under monotheism important aspects of prophethood and life hereafter that were necessary for the purpose of warning and in harmony with the period of revelation of this *sūrah* are delineated. In the previous *sūrah*, readers may remember, the divinity of the angels and the jinn was refuted. In this *sūrah*, the divinity of the angels is refuted in relatively clearer terms. The reason for this is that they held the most significance among the deities worshipped by the Idolaters of Arabia.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): God alone is worthy of gratitude. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. He created the angels as well and bestowed on them abilities and powers as deemed appropriate by His wisdom. Angels have no independent authority and say. All blessings and sustenance are the in the hands of God. If He wants to grant them to someone, no one can stop Him and if He wants to withhold them from someone no one can have them granted. Hence He alone is worthy of worship. Worshipping someone other than Him is merely ignorance and foolishness.

Verses (4-8): An assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) that if his people are rejecting him, then they are only following the footsteps of their predecessors and will meet the same fate as they. They have been lured away and they are now in the grasp of God's law. He should not fret over them and consign their matter to God.

The Quraysh are warned that what Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is threatening them with is bound to happen; hence they must not be deceived by their worldly success and not lured by Satan. He is their open enemy and they should regard an enemy not less than an enemy. Very naïve is a person who makes friends with an enemy.

Verses (9-10): A clear testimony to the Day of Judgement is referred to and a warning is issued that he who wants to be near God on that Day must not lead his life on the basis of false support. On that day, no one will be able to procure this nearness on the basis of his alleged deities.

The only thing that will be of benefit to him on that day are the pure words – the words of *tawḥīd* – and these words receive acclaim through good deeds; he who wants the honour of the Hereafter should embrace faith and do good deeds. All other paths are merely self-deception and their fate is eternal doom.

Verses (11-18): Wealth and children and abundance in worldly resources are a blessing of God. Whether a person is given a long life or a short one, it is in the hands of God. No one has any say in any of these things. The harmony found in the conflicting elements of this universe clearly shows that it is being governed by the all-powerful and sustaining God. Other deities neither have any say nor will they be of any benefit on the Day of Judgement.

People are warned that they have been informed of the actual reality. If they do not give it due importance, they will only ruin themselves and not harm God in any way. God does not need them; it is they who need Him. The Prophet (sws) is assured that his preaching will influence only those whose hearts are vibrant and living; as for those whose hearts are dead, he should leave them alone. The fate that has been ordained for them will surely be met by them.

Verses (19-28): Details are provided about believers and disbelievers. The wisdom behind the contradiction and conflict found in this universe is alluded to: just as the Almighty has created light and darkness and the creation of both these elements is based on wisdom and expediency, in a similar manner this clash between belief and disbelief is also based on God's wisdom. Thus, one must not expect that every person will embrace faith. Only those people will accept faith who have the radiance of knowledge and cognizance in them and who duly value these blessings.

Verses (29-38): A certain group among the People of the Book is praised who in spite of all the disorder around them adhere to the Book of God. It is also said that just as they have had the good fortune of adhering to the Torah, they will be fortunate to profess belief in the Qur'ān. This is because the Qur'ān has come in accordance with the predictions about it found in the Torah and other scriptures. After the Torah the Almighty has done a great favour to these unlettered Arabs by giving them the Qur'ān as through this Book they have been given the leadership of the world on the condition that they give due importance to it. It is then asserted that though there are ingrates and mean among them, but at the same time there are sensible and those among them who take lead in doing virtuous deeds. It is these people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān. As for those who do not value this favour and gift of God, they will meet the same fate as the one ordained by God for such people.

Verses (39-41): The Quraysh are warned that they are not the first nation of the world; in fact, they have come after many nations that lived prior

to them; Hence, there is no reason that He will not implement His justice on them the way He implemented His justice on the previous nations. God does not have different criteria of justice; He has the same scale for all; He is giving respite to the Quraysh in spite of their rebelliousness. They should not regard this to be their success; they are in fact accruing further loss. God is gracious and forgiving and that is because He is giving them respite. However, when He seizes them, none of their alleged deities will be able to help them. The heavens and the earth remain at their place because of God; this is not because of deities.

Verses (42-45): The Quraysh are reminded that before the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) they would express their fervour that if a prophet comes to them they will become the most guided nation of the world; yet when a prophet has come to them they are busy day and night in conspiring against him and are thereby inviting the wrath of God which always visits those who reject their messenger. They should remember that if God wants to seize someone immediately, no one can stop Him. However, He has appointed a time of His decision for each nation.

Even a cursory glance at the above mentioned analysis of the discourse of the *sūrah* portrays its internal coherence and its relationship with the previous *sūrah*. Now with the name of God, I begin the exegesis of this *sūrah*.و بيد الله التوفيق و هو الهادي في الصواب (Only He grants the urge and opportunity and only He guides to what is right).

Section I: Verses (1-8)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاء إِنَّ اللهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١) مَا يَفْتَحِ اللهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِن رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكْ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢) يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللهِ عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرُ اللهِ يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ (٣) وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَإِلَى اللهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٤) يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللهِ الْغَرُورُ (٥) إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٦) الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧) أَفَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ إِنَّ اللهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا

يَصْنَعُونَ (٨)

Only God is worthy of gratitude – Creator of the heavens and the earth, One Who has made angels as messengers with two, three and four pairs of wings. He augments His creation according to His will. Indeed, God has power over all things. (1)

No one can withhold the blessings God opens for people and what He withholds none can open it apart from Him. And He alone is the Mighty, the Wise. (2)

People! Bear in mind God's favour to you. Is there any other creator who provides for you from the heavens and earth? There is no God but Him. So, where then do you turn away? (3)

And if they deny you, do not grieve; many a prophet before you were denied and to God alone all matters shall be presented. (4)

People! The promise of God is bound to be fulfilled; so let not the life of this world deceive you, nor let the deceiver Satan deceive you about God. Indeed, Satan is your enemy: therefore, treat him as an enemy. He tempts his followers only to make them the firewood of Hell. Those who disbelieved shall be sternly punished and for those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds there is forgiveness and a rich reward. (5-7)

Can he whose foul deeds have been made fair to him; thus he regards them to be good [be expected to accept faith]? Thus God alone leads astray whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases. So do not fret yourself in their grief. God is aware of what they are doing. (8)

Explanation

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاء إِنَّ اللهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١)[1]

Readers may remember that the previous *sūrah* also began with the words الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ. Evident from this is the similarity of temperament of both *sūrahs.* The foundation of religion rests on monotheism and the foundation of monotheism is gratitude. This is because it is God alone Who has brought the heavens and the earth into existence and all the inner and outer favours people have are bestowed to them by Him.

In جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ the expression جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ is a permutative (*badl*) of فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ. The purpose of this mention of the specific after the general is that the God Who is the

1. Only God is worthy of gratitude – Creator of the heavens and the earth, One who has made angels as messengers with two, three and four pairs of wings. He augments His creation according to His will. Indeed, God has power over all things.

Creator of the heavens and the earth is the One Who has created angels as messengers. Angels are specially mentioned because in Arab mythology they held the most importance. Arabs regarded them to be favoured daughters of God and would worship them in this capacity. They believed that if these angels are happy they will be able to win over everything for themselves. This belief actually pushed God into a being having only a ceremonial status. They would only ceremonially believe in God but the fountainhead of all their thanksgiving and worship would be their idols who they had carved out in the name of angels. It is to refute this baseless belief of theirs that it is stated that it is God Who should be regarded as the fountainhead of thanksgiving and He alone deserves gratitude. He created the heavens and the earth from nothingness and it is He who deputed angels as messengers. In other words, these angels neither have any share in the creation of the heavens and earth nor have any share in divinity: they only deliver God's decrees to His messengers.

The implication is that people regard envoys of God to have a share in divinity and consider the messengers of God to have Godly powers and thus worship them. Such people have neither recognized the status of God nor of His messengers nor of themselves.

The word أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ is an attribute of رُسُلًا and the word أَجْنِحَةٍ is a plural of جَنَاح. The word جَنَاح means arms of human beings and also means wings of birds. Here this word is used for the angels. Hence, it is of the nature of *mutashābihāt*: only God knows its reality. The purpose is to inform us that not all angels are of the same status. The Almighty, keeping in view various expediencies, has created them in different molds with different abilities and potentials. Some can fly higher and some not as high. Some fly with two wings while others with three and still others with four.

These wings belong to the angels and so only God knows the extent of their flying-power. Moreover, this mention of four is not meant to mention a limit. The purpose here is to merely refer to difference in their categories and status. Hence, this verse does not negate the existence of angels having even more flying-power. Thus certain narratives mention a greater number of wings of Gabriel. It is evident from this that his flying-power and accessing ability is more than the rest of the angels. The purpose of mentioning these details here is that the naïve who have accorded divinity to the angels are not aware of the exalted court of God. The angels have even different powers and abilities in accessing distances what to speak of being His associates. In Sūrah Ṣaffāt, this acknowledgement is expressed through the tongue of Gabriel thus:

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (٣٧: ١٦٤–١٦٦)

And for each of us is an appointed place and We stand arrayed before God. And We glorify Him. (37:164-166)

The words يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاء إِنَّ اللهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ imply that God has the power to create creatures of any strength, potential and ability. If He has created the angels for the communication of His messages, then this is a wondrous manifestation of His power and wisdom. If these angels have various status, then this difference is also an expression of God's majesty as He has power to increase any of His creatures in their form and ability. This increase or decrease of potentials and abilities is in His authority. If He has increased some in this, then this too has specific limits. No one has the authority to claim divinity on its basis nor should others include him in this divinity.

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِن رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكْ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢)[2]

The verse states why God alone is worthy of gratitude. It is said that whatever door of blessing God wants to open for them, He can; no one can stop or withhold these blessings. Similarly, if He wants to deprive someone of these blessings no one has the power to stop Him. In Sūrah Zumar, this subject is discussed in the following words:

قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ (٣٩: ٣٨)

Say: "Do you think then that, if God intended to afflict me, these things which you worship could relieve my affliction; or that if He intended to bless me in some way, they could stop Him?" (39:38)

The implication is that when this is the reality, then it is their mere foolishness to invoke angels and the jinn thinking them to be ones having authority to harm and benefit people. Only God has this authority. Hence He alone is worthy of gratitude and worship.

It may be noted that in this verse first a feminine pronoun is used and

2. No one can withhold the blessings God opens for people and what He withholds none can open it apart from Him. And He alone is the Mighty, the Wise.

then a masculine one for the same noun (رَحْمَة). The reason is that in the first place the external form of the verb is intended, and at the other its meaning. Several examples of this usage have been cited in this exegesis.

The word مِن بَعْدِهِ actually means مِن بَعْدِ إِمسَاكِهِ. It is said in verse 41 ahead: وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ (٤١) (And should they fall, none can hold them back but Him.)

The words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ imply that it is God Who is the real dominant and sovereign being. He opens and He stops and these acts are as per the requisites of His wisdom. That is why He is the Wise One as well.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللهِ عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرُ اللهِ يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ (٣)[3]

What is mentioned in the previous verse in principle is now re-stated here in a conclusive manner. People are asked to bear in mind each and every favour of God and reflect on them. The word نِعْمَت here denotes its complete genre. The verse floats a question before people for their deliberation: can they say that the livelihood they get from the heavens and the earth, the rain that pours down from the heavens and the multifarious things produced by earth are given to them by some other creator than God?

Without waiting for any reply from them, the Qur'ān answers the question by the words: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ (there is no god but God). One reason that the Qur'ān has taken upon itself to answer the question is that none else but the reply it gave is correct. The second reason is that the Idolaters of Arabia who are addressed in this *sūrah* would themselves give this very answer, as is evident from other places of the Qur'ān. The verse goes on to assert that when what has been said is the real fact, then why have they lost their senses and made up other deities.

وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَإِلَى اللهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٤)[4]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that if such stubborn people are rejecting him, then this should not be a cause of wonder or distress for him. Such people have denied messengers before

3. People! Bear in mind God's favour to you. Is there any other creator who provides for you from the heavens and earth? There is no God but Him. So where then do you turn away?

4. And if they deny you, do not grieve; many a prophet before you were denied and to God alone all matters shall be presented.

him as well. The implication is that it is not his mistake that they have adopted this attitude; it is the specific mentality of these rejecters which is responsible for this. The Prophet (sws) should leave them alone; they are following the footsteps of their predecessors; so they too will meet the fate met by them.

The words وَإِلَى اللهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ mean that all matters return to God and will return to Him. What is implied is that God is not unconcerned or disinterested in what is happening here; everything is coming before Him and will come in the future as well. He will give the final verdict; so the Prophet (sws) should trust God in what he does and leave the matter of these people to Him. Reference is also found in this of the fact that those who worship other deities besides God will see the fate of this baseless desire they are showing.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللهِ الْغَرُورُ (٥)[5]

After sounding assurance to the Prophet (sws), his opponents are threatened that they should not regard as bluff the warning sounded to them of the fate of previous nations. The warning of God is bound to materialize. The affluence they possess in this world should not deceive them. They think that since they are blessed with affluence and riches in this world, hence this necessarily means that they are on the right path. They make fun of the Prophet (sws) that why and from where will the promised doom come upon them. However, when the time comes of this divine promise to materialize, they will see that what they were being threatened with was right in front of them.

The word الْغَرُورُ means "the deceiver" and here it denotes Satan because he is the greatest deceiver. The words وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللهِ الْغَرُورُ imply that Satan, the deceiver should not deceive them in the matter of God. God is very merciful and magnanimous and also very stern in retribution and mighty. If, in spite of their arrogance and spreading anarchy in the society, God gives them respite, then they should not be led to believe that they are beyond His grasp or that their alleged deities have saved them or that they will be able to save them when God catches them. Neither does God have a partner nor can anyone stop Him from seizing anyone. Satan has lured them away in order to lead them to Hell. It may be kept in mind that the basis of all luring away from the truth is that which relates to God's attributes. For this reason, it is from here that Satan tries to make his move. It is from this very danger that the verse

5. People! The promise of God is bound to be fulfilled; so let not the life of this world deceive you, nor let the deceiver Satan deceive you about God.

يَاأَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ (٨٢: ٦) (O man! What is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord (82:6)) sounds a warning.

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٦)[6]

The verse says that Satan is their inveterate enemy and people must consider an enemy as enemy and be on guard from his moves. What wisdom can there be in they consigning themselves to him by regarding him to be their chief and leader whereas he is their foe. They should listen up to the fate of such an attitude: if they resign themselves to him, then his sole purpose is to lead them to the pit of Hell.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧)[7]

This verse is an explanation of the inevitable promise of God mentioned in verse five earlier. The implication is that no one should be deceived in any way in the matter of God that this world will continue on with its journey without any distinction being made between vice and virtue, good and evil. Those who are of this view have been utterly deceived by Satan in the matter of God's attributes. A day is bound to come wherein the disbelievers will face a grievous doom and the believers who did righteous deeds will be worthy of forgiveness and a great reward.

أَفَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ إِنَّ اللهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ (٨)[8]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that if these people are not professing faith, then this is not because of any fault of his; it is because they are not facing the law of God. So he should not fret over them and leave them to themselves. Whatever they are doing is fully in the knowledge of God. Since He is fully aware of their deeds, He will deal with them accordingly.

The answer to the conditional clause أَفَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا is suppressed. If this suppression is revealed, the complete sentence would

6. Indeed, Satan is your enemy: therefore, treat him as an enemy. He tempts his followers only to make them the firewood of Hell.

7. Those who disbelieved shall be sternly punished and for those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds there is forgiveness and a rich reward.

8. Can he whose foul deeds have been made fair to him; thus he regards them to be good [be expected to accept faith]? Thus God leads astray whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases. So do not fret yourself in their grief. God is aware of what they are doing.

be something to the effect: "Can you guide him whose evil deeds have been made fair to him and he regards his vices to be virtues?" The implication is that it is against the established practice of the Almighty for such people to receive guidance; so the Prophet (sws) should not worry about such people and consign their matter to God. In Sūrah Zumar, what is mentioned here is stated in the following words:

أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ أَفَأَنتَ تُنقِذُ مَن فِي النَّارِ (٣٩: ١٩)

He who has become worthy of punishment, will then you be able to rescue him who is in Hell. (39: 19)

It is evident from this that one state of a person is that he sins but he feels guilty about it and another state is that his foul deeds seem fair to him such that he regards them to be his real talent and style and a way to development and a requirement of culture and education. In the first state one can expect a person to correct himself if he is reminded and warned but the second state signifies perversion of the heart and intellect. The Qur'ān calls such a state as *khatm-i qulūb* (heart-sealing) or *rayn* (rust). He who is afflicted by this malady is facing the law of God; no one can now guide him.

The words فَإِنَّ اللهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء point to the established practice of God prescribed by him about providing guidance or depriving people from it. I have explained it at many instances in this exegesis. It is further explained later in the *sūrah*.

The words فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ إِنَّ اللهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ advise the Prophet (sws) to not fret over such people. They themselves have committed intellectual and spiritual suicide. If they are not accepting faith, then this is not because there is some mistake on his part in calling them to the truth; the fact is that their hearts have been sealed; so instead of grieving over them, he should consign their matter to God; He is observing all their pranks and will deal with them in the manner they are worthy of.

The word حَسَرَاتٍ can grammatically be an accusative of state or an accusative of cause. Both usages are found in classical Arabic literature. The word عَلَيْهِمْ, in my opinion, is related to حَسَرَاتٍ the way it is in يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ (٣٦: ٣٠). The plurality of the word حَسَرَاتٍ expresses profundity of sorrow.

Section II: Verses (9-18)

In the succeeding verses, first the promise certain to be fulfilled mentioned in verse 5 earlier is substantiated. After that it is stated that people who want to procure the nearness of God and want to succeed before Him should leave aside procuring the nearness of false deities and adopt the right way. The right way is that a person accepts faith and does righteous deeds. Faith is something which ascends to God, and righteous deeds lend support to it and elevates it. This is the only right way. Those who have forsaken this way and have taken other ones and are also striving day and night to make people leave the right way will one day find their conspiracies shattered.

After that, it is said that increase in wealth and children and increase or decrease in age and other similar things rest with God; angels or jinn or their alleged deities have no say in them. The harmony between conflicting elements of this universe show that only the intention of God Almighty and Powerful is applicable in it. Other than Him, no one has any authority whatsoever.

After that people are informed that it is for their own benefit that they are being invited to a call. God does not need them; on the contrary, they need God. If they accept this call, they will succeed in this world and in the next and if they reject it, they will be doomed. At the same time, an assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) by informing him what type of people will accept this call and what type will be deprived from it.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيَاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَسُقْنَاهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا كَذَلِكَ النُّشُورُ (٩) مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَكْرُ أُوْلَئِكَ هُوَ يَبُورُ (١٠) وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِن مُّعَمَّرٍ وَلَا يُنقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (١١) وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَمِن كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢) يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَالَّذِينَ

تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِن قِطْمِيرٍ (١٣) إِن تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءكُمْ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُونَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ (١٤) يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاء إِلَى اللهِ وَاللهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (١٥) إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (١٦) وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللهِ بِعَزِيزٍ (١٧) وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى وَإِن تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَى حِمْلِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَى إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَمَن تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى اللهِ الْمَصِيرُ (١٨)

And it is God Who sends forth winds which then set the clouds in motion. We then drive the clouds to some dead land. Thus through this We give new life to the land after it has died. In such a manner will the dead rise. (9)

He who seeks honour, let him know that all honour is for God alone. A pure word rises towards Him and the righteous deed lends support to it. And those who are contriving evil schemes shall be sternly punished, and their schemes will be routed. (10)

And God created you from clay, then from a drop of water and then made you in pairs. And no woman conceives or gives birth except with His knowledge. No person of age is given an increase in age or a reduction in it except that it is written in a register. All this is easy for God. (11)

And the two seas are not alike. One is sweet, quenches the thirst and is pleasant to drink while the other is saltish and bitter. And from both you eat fresh meat and bring out ornaments to wear. And you see how the ships cut across through them so that you seek His bounty and so that you show gratitude. He makes the night to pass into the day, and the day into the night and He has made the sun and the moon subservient. Each orbits for an appointed time. That very God is your Lord. His is the sovereignty. As for those whom you invoke besides Him they have not the slightest power over anything. If you invoke them they will not hear your pleading, and even if they hear you they will not respond to it and on the Day of Judgement they will deny your polytheism. And none can inform the way in the one who is informed can. (12-14)

O People! It is you who stand in need of God. He is self sufficient and has all worthy attributes. If He wants, He will destroy you and replace you with a new creation and this is not difficult for Him at all. (15-17)

And no soul shall bear another's burden. And if a burdened soul asks for help to lift its burden, not the slightest help will be provided to it even from a relative. You can only warn those who fear their Lord even though they cannot see Him, and are steadfast in the prayer. And he who acquires purity acquires it for himself only. And to God shall all return. (18)

Explanation

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيَاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَسُقْنَاهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا كَذَلِكَ النُّشُورُ (٩)[9]

An argument is furnished here from the phenomena of nature to substantiate the promise mentioned in verse five earlier. People should not regard it to be far-fetched; it is not the slightest difficult for God to raise people to life again once they die. After all, it is common observation that a land is totally dry and desolate; there is no chance of any vegetation to sprout from it when suddenly God sends winds from somewhere; these winds set the clouds in motion and gather them; then God drives these clouds to that dry land and drenches it with rain; as a result, every part of it enlivens. The verse goes on to state: كَذَلِكَ النُّشُورُ; ie. in a very similar way, people will rise up on the Day of Judgement. The implication is that God continues to make a nation observe death and life after death in this world. So why do they regard the Day of Judgement to be something impossible. I have referred many times in this exegesis to the fact that this world by its very existence is the best teaching place of what the Qur'ān teaches. If a person uses his intellect and insight, he can find around him a corroboration of every claim made by the Qur'ān.

The style adopted in this verse is also worthy of attention. First the past tense أَرْسَلَ is used and then the indefinite tense تُثِيرُ is used. After that first person verbs سُقْنَاهُ and أَحْيَيْنَا occur. This diversity in style has a number of benefits in it. Though this is not the place to go into details, this much should be kept in mind that the past tense only comes to narrate an incident, indefinite tense portrays an existing situation and the first person verbs signify affection.

مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَكْرُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُوَ يَبُورُ (١٠)[10]

The implication is that the Day of Judgement nevertheless is bound to come and everyone will be brought before God. As for those who seek the correct answer to the question that who will be held in honour before

9. And it is God Who sends forth winds which then set the clouds in motion. We then drive the clouds to some dead land. Thus through this We give new life to the land after it has died. In such a manner will the dead rise.

10. He who seeks honour, let him know that all honour is for God alone. A pure word rises towards Him and the righteous deed lends support to it. And those who are contriving evil schemes shall be sternly punished, and their schemes will be routed.

God and who in dishonour, they should remember that all honour belongs to God; so, whoever will receive honour will receive it because of their relationship with God and because of His endowment.

The words إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ state the way to attain this honour: what rises to God from human beings is the word of faith. No other thing can become a source of acquiring His nearness. What supports and augments this word of faith is a righteous deed. Without this deed the word of faith withers away. It is as if the word of faith is like a grape vine which in itself is luxuriant yet its luxuriance and lushness depends on a support on which it can lean upon, grow and develop. This support is achieved by it through a righteous deed. It is this deed which nourishes and nurtures it to bear fruit otherwise just as without a support grape vines shrivel in a similar way without righteous deeds, faith wilts away.

In the opinion of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās (rta),[11] the expression الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ refers to the word of faith and the mention of the righteous deed alongside it bears witness that it refers to the word of faith. The word الطَّيِّبُ refers to lushness and luxuriance of the word. This is because with regard to the philosophy of religion it is this word which is the foundation of all knowledge and wisdom. He who acquired it, acquired the key to all the treasure of knowledge and wisdom. It is also an acknowledged fact that faith and righteous deeds necessitate one another. Just as righteous deeds have no basis without faith in a similar way without righteous deeds, faith is a lifeless thing. In order to fully grasp this, readers are advised to look up what I have written while explaining verses 24-26 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm.

The Idolaters are explained that they think that their angel deities will earn success and honour for them before God; the fact is that honour belongs to God alone and the sole way to acquire the nearness of God is faith which has the support of righteous deeds. At many places, the Qur’ān has cited the fact that the Idolaters would regard their deities to procure for them God’s nearness. Thus for example, it is said:

مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللهِ زُلْفَى (٣٩: ٣)

We worship them only so that they may bring us nearer to God. (39:3)

At another place, the words are:

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللهِ آلِهَةً لِّيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا (١٩: ٨١)

11. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 3, 550.

And they have set up other deities besides God so that they can become a source of honour for them. (19:81)

In the verse under discussion, it is this false notion of theirs which is refuted. They are told to come out of this fool's Paradise and if they want to earn honour before God, they should accept faith and do righteous deeds.

The words وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ imply that people who instead of facing this reality plot evil schemes to protect their pride and to harm God's religion and His messenger should remember that they will not acquire honour in this way; on the contrary, they are calling for their grievous doom.

The declination of the word السَّيِّئَاتِ in the accusative seems a little odd here because the verb does not act transitively in this way. In the opinion of al-Zamakhsharī,[12] this word is an adjective of a suppressed verbal noun and the implied construction is يَمْكُرُونَ المَكَرَات السَّيِّئَاتِ. This interpretation seems to be correct. An example of this usage can be seen in verse 43 ahead.

The words وَمَكْرُ أُوْلَئِكَ هُوَ يَبُورُ sound a warning. In other words, people who themselves have been misled in this regard and are also making vehement efforts to mislead others in this matter should remember that all these conspiracies of theirs will be routed. The repetition of the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) in the sentence has incorporated a stress in it: these conspiracies will not be able to harm others; on the contrary, these conspiracies themselves will be afflicted with harm and they will become a means of destruction of these people. Further ahead, more light is shed on this subject by the words: وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ (٣٥: ٤٣) because the truth is a common treasure and a means to success for all. If someone opposes it, he only effaces his own eyes and strikes at this own feet.

وَاللهُ خَلَقَكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِن مُّعَمَّرٍ وَلَا يُنقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللهِ يَسِيرٌ (١١)[13]

The verse states that any increase or decrease in age or number of children is in the knowledge of God and takes place with His directive. The deities of the Idolaters have no role in this. Hence they should turn

12. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 612.

13. And God created you from clay, then from a drop of water and then made you in pairs. And no woman conceives or gives birth except with His knowledge. No person of age is given an increase in age or a reduction in it except that it is written in a register. All this is easy for God.

to God to ask for longevity and children; they should not seek the support of anyone else. It may be kept in mind that wealth and children, life and wealth and other similar wants have always remained a factor that has led people to polytheism. People who are childless or whose children continue to die in infancy or only have female offspring are easily led by Satan towards places of polytheism like altars, graves and mausoleums if these people have superstitious tendencies. In the polytheism of the Idolaters of Arabia, this factor contributed a lot. They did not regard their deities to be the creators of the heavens and the earth but in matters like sustenance, wealth and children they would regard them – in particular the angels – to be very influential. Similarly, they would worship the jinn thinking that they had a say in matters of sickness and ill-health. I have mentioned in Sūrah An'ām that they would regard certain jinn to be so dangerous that they would even sacrifice their children for them. They contended that if they did not sacrifice a boy or a girl to keep them happy, they will kill all their children. Similarly, those afflicted with sickness would turn to them and supplicate before them to grant them health and a long life. This verse refutes all these superstitions.

The words وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا form an introduction for what is stated next. Attention is directed here to the established reality that it is God Who created man from clay and then made his offspring grow and spread through a drop of sperm and created them in pairs. The implication is that every part of this house was made and developed by God and this is a reality which they cannot deny; then after making this system what was the difficulty that afflicted Him that He was compelled to consign matters like sustenance, offspring and longevity to others? Is He Who created them from a drop of fluid, made their generations flourish and created them in pairs so powerless as to look after their affairs referred to above so that they now have to look to other deities for their fulfillment?

The words وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنثَىٰ وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ express the necessary outcome of the premise stated earlier: He who has set the family of Adam in procession knows when a woman will get pregnant and whether she carries a male or a female offspring and He also knows when she will give birth and the form and nature of the child. The knowledge of God is specially referred to here because the Idolaters of Arabia never refuted God as the Creator of all; they had this doubt that how can He be aware of all the affairs of this huge and expansive universe; they contended that since this does not seem likely, hence He has consigned many matters like sustenance, children and life-span to His partners and associates. By using the words إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ, the Qur'ān has struck on this

notion of theirs and asserted that the smallest of events that happens in this world is not beyond the knowledge of the Creator.

In the sentence وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِن مُّعَمَّرٍ وَلَا يُنقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ the word مُّعَمَّرٍ does not mean "an old person." It refers to every person who is given an age to live in this world whether long or short. Zamakhsharī[14] has interpreted this word thus and I think that this is the correct interpretation.

These words further explain what is said above: The age of a person whether short or long is in God's knowledge and at His bidding. The words إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ are in place of the words إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ above. This style further strengthens what was said above. Thus, it is not that God merely knows all these things, all of them are written in a register; they should not think that God will forget anything.

The words إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللهِ يَسِيرٌ refute the doubt cited above with which the Arabs were afflicted: how can God be aware of all these minute details? It was because of these doubts that they invented various deities and partners of God who they thought would help Him in these matters and then went on to worship them in such a manner as if God was now only a ceremonial head who had delegated all His powers to His deputies. These words of the verse refute this notion of theirs: no task is difficult for God so that He may require some helper to accomplish it.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَمِن كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢) يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ذَلِكُمُ اللهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِن قِطْمِيرٍ (١٣)[15]

These verses, through another aspect, refute polytheism and deities. The conflict between opposing elements of nature is a very significant

14. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 613.

15. And the two seas are not alike. One is sweet, quenches the thirst and is pleasant to drink while the other is saltish and bitter. And from both you eat fresh meat and bring out ornaments to wear. And you see how the ships cut across through them so that you seek His bounty and so that you show gratitude. He makes the night to pass into the day, and the day into the night and He has made the sun and the moon subservient. Each orbits for an appointed time. That very God is your Lord. His is the sovereignty. As for those whom you invoke besides Him they have not the slightest power over anything.

factor that leads to polytheism. The Qur'ān has negated it through various aspects and I have been explaining it in this exegesis. Here too the reference is that the existence of opposing entities in this world does not show that different forces are controlling it because besides their outward opposing nature there is deep harmony between them. It is evident from this that a supreme powerful being dominates all these opposing entities and uses them as His wisdom for the collective benefit of the universe.

The verse وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَمِن كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ states that there are two seas –both different from one another as per their apparent characteristics. The water of one tastes sweet, quenches thirst and is pleasant to drink; that of the other is sour and bitter. Both thump into each other but this never happens that the bitter one is able to turn the sweet one bitter or vice versa. A supreme being makes them follow certain limits even though they strike one another. In Sūrah Raḥmān, the words used are: مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيَانِ (٥٥: ١٩– ٢٠) (He has let loose the two oceans: they meet one another. Yet between them is a barrier which they cannot cross, (55:19-20)).

People should see how in spite of being opposite to one another, these seas achieve a higher objective: from both types of seas, they are able to obtain fresh meat in their long sea-journeys and besides this nourishment they are also able to take out pearls from them for embellishment. They also see that these seas have been put to their service so that their ships cut across them so that people can travel from one place to another to obtain the blessings of God and to thank Him as a result. The implication is that people should not get engrossed and entangled in the apparent contradiction found around them between various entities; they should also reflect on the harmony found between them. If they do, they will find out that it is the One powerful and living God Who has created this world and through His power and wisdom has put conflicting entities and forces of this world in the service of man so that he may be grateful to God.

The words يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى direct attention to what is just said by employing another example: The case of the day and night which appear before man every day is no different. Both in their apparent outlook seem to be opposite to one another yet there exists great harmony between them as if they complement one another. Both are necessary for the survival of this world and of its inhabitants. Similar is the case of the sun and the moon. The foolish regard them to be deities and worship them even though they testify by their very existence that God has put them to the service of His creation. Thus both with their fixed timetables fervently serve the needs

of man.

The words ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ summarize the previous discussion: this God Whose majesty, power and wisdom people observe is their Lord and to Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.

Consider next, the last section of the verse: وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِن قِطْمِيرٍ. The word قِطْمِيرٍ refers to the thin covering over the seed of a date. These words express in a negative way what is said above: those whom they invoke and worship besides God have no role whatsoever in the creation and management of the affairs of this world.

إِن تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءَكُمْ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُونَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ (١٤)[16]

The expression اسْتَجَاب لَه means "he responded to him" or "he listened to his invocation."

The verse points out the helplessness and baselessness of their deities: if they call him when they are in difficulty, they will not hear them and if they are able to hear them then they will not be able to respond to them. Their helpless is apparent in this world and in the Hereafter it will become even more evident. The deities which the Idolaters worshipped, in the first place never existed and hence there could be no question of they hearing them or responding to their prayers; in the second place, if they worshipped any of those who actually existed, then firstly in the Hereafter they will express their lack of knowledge on being worshipped and secondly the righteous among them like the angels and the prophets will openly declare their acquittal from them. The evil among those worshipped like the jinn and the devils will reply to the worshippers that it was their misfortune that they worshipped them; now they should bear the consequence; neither they can help them now nor can they be of any avail to them.

The words وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُونَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ state that these deities were unaware that in this world they were invoked for help by the Idolaters and also helpless to respond to them and on the Day of Judgement they will reject they were worshipped as associated deities to God. Thus the details of this rejection have been cited in Sūrah Sabā' thus:

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَهَٰؤُلَاءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ

16. If you invoke them they will not hear your pleading, and even if they hear you they will not respond to it and on the Day of Judgement they will deny your polytheism. And none can inform in the way the one who is informed can.

أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِم بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ (٣٤: ٤٠-٤١)

And bear in mind the day when He will gather all; then He will ask the angels: "Have these people been worshipping you?" They will reply: "Exalted are you. You are our helper against them; in fact they used to worship the jinn." (34: 40-41)

The words وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ sound an admonition and a very strong and subtle one indeed. The word خَبِير is not defined by an definite particle to portray its magnitude. The implication is that people should listen up to what is being said to them because only a real cognizant being knows what is hidden from the eyes of people and which will one day manifest before them. No one besides him can inform people the most about what is hidden; yet it their misfortune that they did not give Him due importance and remained caught in their fancies.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاء إِلَى اللهِ وَاللهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (١٥) إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (١٦) وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللهِ بِعَزِيزٍ (١٧)[17]

These verses add and strongly add to the admonition stated above. The address is also by the words يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ so that everyone should fully listen up that all this elaborate arrangement made for their education and reminding and the day-night effort undertaken by the messenger of God to awaken people from their slumber is not because God is need of these endeavours so that some of His tasks need to be fulfilled through them. God is totally self-sufficient and praiseworthy in His attributes; it is these people who need God – both in this world and in the Hereafter. So self-sufficient is God that if He wants He can destroy all of them and bring forth a new creation in their place. If He decides to do this, it is not the least difficult for Him. It is His mercy and favour on them that in spite of their ungrateful attitude He is continuing to give them respite; it would be better for them to benefit from this respite otherwise they should remember that neither will they be able to harm God in any way nor His messenger; they will only lead themselves to doom.

I have already explained the expression هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ at another place that God's being is perfect and complete and this perfection of His is not dependent on anything external to His being. At the same time, He is has all worthy attributes. His relationship with His creation is not on the

17. O People! It is you who stand in need of God. He is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes. If He wants, He will destroy you and replace you with a new creation and this is not difficult for Him at all.

basis of any need but on entirely on the basis of His mercy and favour:

من نه کردم خلق تا سود ے کنم
بلکه کردم خلق تا جود ے کنم

(I did not create [people] to receive benefit for Myself; in fact, I created them to show them mercy).

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى وَإِن تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَى حِمْلِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَى إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَمَن تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى اللهِ الْمَصِيرُ (١٨)[18]

This verse explains from another angle what is said above. It is stated that on that day no soul will bear the burden of another; on the contrary, each soul shall bear its own burden.

Consider the section of the verse: وَإِن تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَى حِمْلِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَى. The noun qualified by the word مُثْقَلَةٌ is suppressed. The actual expression would be نَفْسٌ مُثْقَلَةٌ (a soul burdened by its sins). Similarly, in the expression إِلَى حِمْلِهَا the *muḍāf* (governing noun) is suppressed before حِمْلِ and the noun of كَانَ ie., المدعو is also suppressed. All these suppressions are common in classical Arabic.

The implication is that if a soul burdened by its sins cries out to someone to share its burden it will find none to help it even if it invokes help from its closest relative. The virtuous will not help it because if they did not accompany its sins in the previous world, why will they become its companions in the Hereafter. As for the wrongdoers, they themselves will be buried in their sins; so how could they extend help to anyone.

The words إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) to inform his addressees of these facts; if they pay heed, then it is okay; if they do not, then he should leave them alone; his warning can only be effective on those who use their intellect and other faculties of cognizance and fear God even if they have not seen Him and diligently adhere to the prayer; he cannot cure those who want to believe after seeing everything from their eyes; he should consign their matter to

18. And no soul shall bear another's burden. And if a burdened soul asks for help to lift its burden, not the slightest help will be provided to it even from a relative. You can only warn those who fear their Lord even though they cannot see Him, and are steadfast in the prayer. And he who acquires purity acquires it for himself only. And to God shall all return.

God.

The mention of وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ is because adhering to the prayer is the foremost manifestation of faith and a symbol of God's fear. He who fears God even though he has not seen him will definitely show diligence in offering the prayer. He who is heedless of the prayer is heedless of God even though he may make tall claims to faith by his tongue.

The words وَمَن تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى اللهِ الْمَصِيرُ point to the benefit of the prayer: he who wants to do away with the burden of his sins and wants to spiritually cleanse himself should be diligent and vigilant in the prayer instead of relying on false support. This will cleanse him of sins and he who acquires this spiritual cleansing will only benefit his own self because God is not in need of any one's worship or obedience; it is His servants who are in need, and everyone is set to return to Him alone.

Section III: Verses (19-28)

The succeeding verses state the types of people who will accept faith and the types who will be deprived from it. In order to understand this reality, attention is directed to the existence of opposite elements of nature in this universe: it has light and it has darkness; similarly, it has heat and it also has coldness. Likewise, there are fertile lands which become lush green because of rain and there also barren lands which in spite of abundant rain do not bear any produce. On a similar note, people also have different tendencies and qualities. People whose hearts are vibrant and living will benefit from this rain which is pouring down on them in the form of the Qur'ān; however, the dead at heart and mind will be deprived of this blessing. Just as God has created heat and coldness, light and darkness for the overall benefit of the universe in a similar manner He has given respite to people who like vice as He has to those who like virtue. This is because it is in this conflict between vice and virtue the potentials of the righteous materialize and are polished and the truth is conclusively delivered to the wrong-doers. Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ (١٩) وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ (٢٠) وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ (٢١) وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاء وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ إِنَّ اللهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاء وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ (٢٢) إِنْ أَنتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ (٢٣) إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (٢٤) وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ

وَبِالزُّبُرِ وَبِالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ (٢٥) ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٢٦) أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بِيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ (٢٧) وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء إِنَّ اللهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ (٢٨)

The blind and those having sight will not be equal nor darkness and light, shade and heat, the living and the dead. It is only God Who makes those hear whom He wants to and you cannot make those who are in their graves hear you. You are only a warner. We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. And there is not a single community in which a warner has not come. And if these people reject you, then those before them also rejected. Their messengers came to them with veritable signs, with scriptures, and with a radiant Book. Then I seized these people. So see how My curse on them was! (19-26)

Did you not see that God sent down water from the sky? Thus We brought forth from it fruits of different colours. And in the mountains also there are streaks of various shades of white and red, and jet-black also. And human beings, animals and beasts are of different colours also. In a similar manner, only those among His servants will fear Him Who have knowledge. Indeed, God is Dominant and Forgiving. (27-28)

Explanation

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ (١٩)[19]

The word أَعْمَى (blind) here signifies people whose mind and heart have become blind. The word بَصِيرُ signifies people whose abilities of head and heart are alive and they use them. This verse sounds assurance to the Prophet (sws) and tells him that the response to his call will be different. Those who have obliterated the eyes of their faculties of intellect and whose hearts have become lifeless will not accept his call however much an effort he makes. Only those people will benefit from the radiance of the light he has who have insight in them. It is the law of the Almighty that those who keep alive and duly value their innate abilities find that their insight and guidance has been enhanced, and those who do not value these abilities, they are deprived of them what to speak of their enhancement. In Sūrah Naml, this subject is discussed thus:

إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاء إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ مَا أَنتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمْيِ

19. The blind and those having sight will not be equal.

عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا (۲۷: ۸۰–۸۱)

You cannot make the dead listen to you nor the deaf when they are running after turning their backs. And you cannot also bring the blind back on track. You can only make those listen who profess belief in our revelations. (27:80-81)

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ (۴۰) وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ (۴۱)[20]

The verses state that just as there is darkness and light in this world and heat and shade as well and both counterparts in these pairs are not the same, similarly the two types of people mentioned above cannot be the same. However, just as hidden in darkness and light, shade and heat is the collective benefit of this world, in the same manner in the existence of these two types of people exists collective benefit. At other instances in the Qur'ān, this benefit is mentioned. At such instances, it is explained that since this world has been created by God to test the free-will of man hence wisdom entails that those people also be given respite till a certain period of time who do not duly value the abilities bestowed to them by God and spend their lives by following falsehood and not the truth.

Some scholars regard the recurrence of لَا as superfluous. In my opinion, this is not so. Its recurrence is meant for emphasis.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاء وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ إِنَّ اللهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاء وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ (۲۲)[21]

What is said above is stated in this verse from another aspect: This was a time when the Prophet (sws) was very worried on the indifferent and evasive attitude adopted by his people. He feared that this may be because of some shortcoming on his part. To dispel this worry, the Almighty has assured him through various styles in this verse. He is told that his duty is to make the living listen to his message and not the dead. Those who abilities are functional and vibrant listen to him and also accept what he says. As for those who are spiritually and intellectually dead, they will never be able to respond to his calls however much he may want this to happen.

In the expression: إِنَّ اللهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاء, the word إسماع means to urge and propel someone to hear and accept something. The expression implies that it is God Who blesses a person with the urge to listen and to accept and all intentions of God are governed by His wisdom. In this regard, his law is that those who keep alive the natural abilities bestowed to them by

20. Nor darkness and light, shade and heat.

21. The living and the dead. It is only God Who makes those hear whom He wants to and you cannot make those who are in their graves hear you.

Him find in themselves the divinely given urge to listen and understand further. On other hand, those who do not duly value their natural abilities are morally and spiritually dead; only God has the power to put life in them.

إِنْ أَنتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ (٢٣) إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (٢٤)[22]

These verses delineate the bound and limits of the preaching responsibility of the Prophet (sws): he is only liable to inform them of the looming danger; he is not liable to make everyone accept his message. God has sent him with the truth. Each and everything he is informing people of is the truth and certain to materialize. His responsibility is to make those who listen to him aware of their good fate and to let those who turn away from him know of the dreadful fate that awaits them. He is not liable for anything beyond this; hence he should not be worried about them.

The words وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ address the Prophet (sws) and tell him that he is not the first warner in this world, God Has sent warners among previous nations as well and there is guidance for him and his people in the account of these warners. God will deal with him in the same manner as He dealt with His messengers and deal with his nation in the same way as He dealt with the previous nations.

وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالزُّبُرِ وَبِالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ (٢٥) ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٢٦)[23]

This is a further explanation of what is stated above in concise words. The Prophet (sws) is told that if people are rejecting him, then this is nothing new. Earlier nations too rejected their respective messengers. This is an age old tradition. He should not think that this is the first time that a people of a messenger have behaved like this. The implication is that if this had happened for the first time, it could have been a cause of worry for him that perhaps it was due to his mistake that they are behaving like this. However, since all nations adopted this very attitude with their respective messenger one can see a persistent pattern in this.

The words جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالزُّبُرِ وَبِالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ imply that it is not

22. You are only a warner. We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. And there is not a single community in which a warner has not come.

23. And if these people reject you, then those before them also rejected. Their messengers came to them with veritable signs, with scriptures, and with a radiant Book. Then I seized these people. So see how My curse on them was!

the case that the messengers came empty-handed; on the contrary, they came with very lucid proofs, miracles, scriptures and with the clear Book of God. However, none of these could convince their addressees. In other words, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is being told that he should not expect that his addressees will accept faith if they are provided the sign they are demanding. All these signs, scriptures and books are of no use for such people.

The words الْبَيِّنَاتِ and الزُّبُرِ have a general connotation. All messengers of God were sent with them. The expression الْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ however refers to the Torah, as before the Qur'ān, it was the Torah that occupied the status of the lucid Book.

The words ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا express what the Almighty did with the nations which adopted the attitude described above. It is stated that when they reject their respective messenger, the Almighty seized them and what an exemplary punishment He meted out to them. The implication is that if Muḥammad's people also become adamant on their obduracy, the Almighty will deal in a similar manner with them. His law is the same for all.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بِيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ (٢٧)[24]

The reality that is communicated earlier in verses 20-22 is once again explained here in the light of some other examples found in this universe. Verses 23-26 are parenthetical in nature and address the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). Once they ended, the discourse switches to its original theme. It is stated that do not people see that God sends down rain from the heavens and as a result what is produced is not the same; things of different sorts and colour are produced. Thus beautiful, colourful and tasty fruits are borne at some places, while at some others defective and thorny bushes sprout. Same is the case with this divine rain in the form of the Qur'ān. Through it the abilities and potentials of the righteous develop while the evil found in others is exposed. This is because Satan will not easily put up with the Qur'ān; he will in fact instigate his followers to oppose it. The word أَلْوَانُ does not merely occur in Arabic to mean "colour"; it also means "types" and "sorts". In the next portion of this verse also, the word is used in this very meaning.

24. Did you not see that God sent down water from the sky? Thus We brought forth from it fruits of different colours. And in the mountains also there are streaks of various shades of white and red, and jet-black also.

In Sūrah A'rāf, this aspect of the effects of rain is mentioned thus:

وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لاَ يَخْرُجُ إِلاَّ نَكِدًا (٧: ٥٨)

And the land which is fertile, then with the directive of its Lord its vegetation looks good and the land which is defective bears vegetation which is defective. (7:58)

Readers are advised to look up my explanation of the above verse.

Consider now, the last part of the verse: وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بِيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ. The word جُدَدٌ is the plural of جُدَّةٌ and is used for the stripes of various colours found on the backs of deer and mules; however, here it is used for large rocks and stone tablets whose stripes or rows are found in mountains.

The word غَرَابِيبُ is the plural of غِرْبِيْب. It means "jet black." It is generally used to emphasize the word أَسْوَد (black). Thus if it is said that something is أَسْوَد غِرْبِيْب, it would mean that it is jet black. The question then arises is that why then does the word غَرَابِيبُ occur before سُوْد. This is because placing a word of emphasis before the noun it qualifies is against eloquence. Linguists have given different answers to this question. Some say that it is a *badal* (permutative) that occurs as an explication. If this interpretation is accepted, then it is true that a *badal* that comes for explication in fact denotes emphasis. In this case, it is as if the speaker repeats his statement in simple words so that it can be etched in the minds. The reason why black rocks and stones are referred to here with this emphasis is that just as there are black rocks in mountains, similarly, there are people among human beings who have black hearts; just as black rocks and white and red ones have separate uses, similarly, black-hearted people serve a purpose – for which they are given respite in this world by God.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء إِنَّ اللهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ (٣٨)[25]

The verse states that like inanimate objects, variety and diversity is found in human beings, beasts and other life forms. The word أَلْوَان here does not mean "colour." It is used in its broader meaning of "type" and "kind." In other words, with regard to appearance, features, characteristics, habits, inner inclinations there exists a great difference

25. And human beings, animals and beasts are there of different colours also. In a similar manner, only those among His servants will fear Him Who have knowledge. Indeed, God is Dominant and Forgiving.

among them. The implication is that just as one cannot expect milk from every animal, one should not expect every person to have fear of God. Only those among God's servants will fear Him who have the radiance of insight and knowledge in them.

The word عُلَمَاء here is not used as a term; it is used in its literal meaning. Just as it is said in verse 18 earlier إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالغَيْبِ (you can warn only those who fear their Lord even though they have not seen Him), the words stated here are: إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء. It is evident from this that one category of people is that which is a slave to the apparent and cannot look beyond; in fact, such people do not even bother to look beyond. Another category is of people that has the ability to look beyond the apparent and discover the reality behind a metaphor. They are the ones who give more importance to the demands of their intellect and soul rather than their carnal ones. It is these people who in reality are the best of mankind and deserve to be called عُلَمَاء (knowledgeable). It is these people who become fearful of God and respond to the message of His messengers.

Just as what is said earlier is meant to assure the Prophet (sws), the attributes عَزِيزٌ (powerful) and غَفُورٌ (forgiving) are mentioned in إِنَّ اللهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ for this very purpose. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should rest assured that those who are rejecting his message today can be seized by God whenever He wants to. However, besides being عَزِيزٌ (Powerful), God is also غَفُورٌ (Forgiving); hence as long as His wisdom entails, He gives respite to such people.

It is evident from these details that it is the true comprehension of God which is the source of true knowledge. He who does not possess this comprehension is devoid of knowledge even though he may memorize all kinds of books. Also evident from these details is that he who has a true comprehension of God will necessarily be a person who fears God. If a person does not have this fear, then it follows that he does not possess the true comprehension of God. It is this comprehension and fear of God that injects real life in all the thoughts and ideologies of mankind after which knowledge becomes really beneficial to it. Without these two, the intelligence of man ends up serving the purpose of Satan and finally leads him to ruin.

Here a question may arise in the minds of some people: it is evident from the previous verses that just as the Almighty has created different sorts of things in this universe and each has a purpose and meaning, similarly the existence of people who oppose the truth, are devoid of God's fear and are proponents of falsehood has a purpose and meaning. If this is the case, then why do such people deserve rebuke and punishment? Though I have continued to dispel this doubt in earlier

paragraphs, let me again point out that man has been created by God on the nature of God; hence man should positively respond to the instincts found in his nature. However, since human beings are not like animals and plants who do not have any will, many of them deviate from their nature and disobey the directives of their Lord. They deserve to be punished because of wrongly exercising their will and intention. However, in spite of this God gives them respite so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them and so that their opposition can become a source of trial for the believers. Viewed thus, the existence of such people is in accordance with wisdom and collective benefit and the Almighty because of this very reason gives them respite in this world. However, viewed from another angle, these people deserve punishment because they did not give due regard to their faculties of sight and hearing and while following their base desires wrongly exercised their will and authority.

Section IV Verses (29-38)

What was stated in the previous section as a principle is applied in the succeeding verses on actual circumstances. It is explained that who among the people of the previous nations deserve to be called knowledgeable and will be the ones who profess in the Qur'ān and what attitude the virtuous and the wrongdoers from among these people will now adopt with the nation the Almighty has bestowed His Book on. After that, the consequences of the deeds of both these types of people are described. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ (٢٩) لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٣٠) وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ (٣١) ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُم مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ (٣٢) جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ (٣٣) وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٣٤) الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِن فَضْلِهِ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ (٣٥) وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يُقْضَى عَلَيْهِمْ

فَيَمُوتُوا وَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُم مِّنْ عَذَابِهَا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي كُلَّ كَفُورٍ (٣٦) وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءكُمُ النَّذِيرُ فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ (٣٧) إِنَّ اللهَ عَالِمُ غَيْبِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٣٨) هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (٣٩)

Indeed, those who recite the Book of God and are diligent in their prayer and spend in private and in public from the sustenance We have blessed them with may hope of a deal that will never be inflicted with loss. So that God may reward them of their deeds and also increase their gains because of His grace. Indeed, He is forgiving and one who accepts. And the Book We have revealed to you is the truth confirming the previous prophecies. God, indeed, is aware of His servants and observes them. (29-31)

Then We have bestowed the Book on those of Our servants whom We chose. So there are some who sin against their souls, some who follow a middle course, and some who, by God's grace, outdo one another in righteous deeds. This is the greatest blessing. For them shall be gardens of Eden which they shall enter. There they shall be made to wear bracelets of gold and pearls, and there their apparel shall be of silk. And they will say: "Gratitude be to God Who has taken away grief from us. Indeed, our Lord is Forgiving and One Who accepts; Who through His grace has admitted us to this mansion of residence. Here we shall face no difficulty nor be inflicted with weariness." (32-35)

As for the disbelievers, for them is the fire of Hell. Neither shall death deliver them, nor shall its torment even be reduced from them. Thus shall We avenge every ungrateful person and they shall cry out there: "Lord! Take us out from here; we will now do pious deeds – different from what we have been doing till now." – Have We not given you enough life so that anyone who would like to be reminded in it can be reminded? And an informer also reached you. So taste this torment. No one shall help the wrongdoers. God knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth. Indeed, He fully knows the secrets found in the hearts. (36-38)

Explanation

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ

تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ (٢٩)[26]

This verse gives a description of the people who are called knowledgeable by the previous verse:إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء (only those among God's servants will fear him who have knowledge). It is stated that those who recite the Book of God, are diligent in their prayer, spend generously openly and secretly from the sustenance God has give them are the ones who fear God. This spending is such a deal that there is no fear of any loss in it in future; its blessings will, on the contrary, continue to increase.

Though this can refer to all the righteous who have these qualities in them; however, I am inclined to think that it refers to the scholars of the People of the Book who professed faith in the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān has praised them at many instances. The reason for my inclination is that after a mention of these qualities occurs a mention of the righteous and wrongdoers of the Ishmaelites in verse 32 ahead; they are mentioned by the words:ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا (Then We bestowed the Book on those of Our servants whom We chose.) Here the word ثُمَّ evidences the fact that those mentioned previously are the ones who were the recipients of God's Book before the Qur'ān and they with the grace of God adhered to its teachings – as a result of which were fortunate enough to profess faith in the Qur'ān as well.

Here, three qualities are specially mentioned viz a viz these righteous people of the Book: reciting the verses of the Qur'ān, adherence to the prayer and spending in the way of God. The reason is that it is these three things which are the real source of preserving religion and the real symbol of God's fear. The Qur'ān has mentioned this very clearly that the Jews had forgotten their scripture and let go of the prayer and had become greedy misers; hence, they were deprived of the treasure of faith. Only those professed faith in the Qur'ān from among them who were secure from these maladies.

The phrase يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ insinuates that those who amassed wealth rightfully or wrongfully by giving preference to the life of this world and each of them who wanted to become a billionaire will end up ruined and broke; however, those who spend in the way of God are investing in a deal which has no chance of any loss.

26. Indeed, those who recite the Book of God and are diligent in their prayer and spend in private and in public from the sustenance We have blessed them with may hope of a deal that will never be inflicted with loss.

لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٣٠)[27]

This verse alludes to the real motive of their spending in the way of God and also to the promise of the Almighty of great reward to them: whatever they spend is not to brag and show off nor do they want any remuneration for it nor do they express this as a favour to others; they spend only to please God so that He may fully reward them and give them even more out of His grace. Thus their Lord will deal with them according to their expectations because He forgives mistakes and blemishes and values the deeds of His servants. The attributes of God غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ mentioned here are meant to encourage people: God accepts their virtues while forgiving their vices and accepts the smallest of good deeds by duly valuing it.

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ (٣١)[28]

This verse invites the righteous among the People of the Book to accept faith. They are told that the Book which has been revealed to them is the truth. Hence all seekers of the truth should whole heartedly welcome it and full adhere to it. The emphasis found in هُوَ الْحَقُّ refers to the fact that the Book Almighty gave them before this became an amalgam of right and wrong because of their alterations; hence, they were deprived of the favour of truth. Now in the form of the Qur'ān the truth has once again been given to them in its pristine and perfect form so that it can become a source of guidance for people.

The words مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ express an argument that substantiates the divine nature of this Book specifically for the People of the Book in a conclusive manner. It is mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān: this Book has come to confirm the prophecies that were already made about its arrival in the previous scriptures. I have referred to these prophecies in detail at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The words إِنَّ اللهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ state that the Almighty has made this arrangement of protecting the truth because He is ever-watching the affairs of His creatures and continues to observe the good and evil they work. So when He saw that the people have been deprived of the guidance He gave them because of the dishonesty of the custodians of

27. So that God may reward them of their deeds and also increase their gains because of His grace. Indeed, He is forgiving and one who accepts.

28. And the Book We have revealed to you is the truth confirming the previous prophecies. God, indeed, is aware of His servants and observes them.

this Book, He made fresh arrangements to protect it. Had He not made this fresh arrangement, it would have meant that He does not care about the good and evil of His creatures. The fact is that not only is He not careless about them, He is fully aware of them and all their minutest details are in His knowledge.

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُم مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ (٣٢)[29]

This verse mentions the system which the Almighty had made to guide mankind. The words الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا refer to the Ishmaelites or the unlettered Arabs in their collective capacity. It is from among them that God had promised Abraham (sws) to send His last messenger. It was through this last messenger that mankind was meant to be given the last and final *sharī'ah* of the Almighty. The verse states that the Almighty chose another group from His people and made the recipient of His Book. Making them recipients means that before them those who had been made the recipients of this Book ie., the Israelites were not found worthy of this position. The position of leadership they held was confiscated from them and was bestowed to the Ishmaelites.

This position of the unlettered Arabs is mentioned in the following verses of Sūrah Jumu'ah: هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (٦٢: ٢)) (It is He who sent forth among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recites to them His revelations and purifies them and instructs them in the Book and in wisdom, (62:2)). At many places, the Qur'ān has referred to this position and has invited them to accept faith and give it due importance. If they do not do so, the leadership of the world – which is a divinely bestowed honour on them – will be confiscated from them. In Sūrah Nisā', this position of honour of the unlettered Arabs is mentioned thus:

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَآ آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُم مُّلْكًا عَظِيمًا فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن صَدَّ عَنْهُ وَكَفَى بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا (٤: ٥١-٥٢))

Are they [the Israelites] envying others [the Ishmaelites] on what

29. Then We have bestowed the Book on those of Our servants whom We chose. So there are some who sin against their souls, some who follow a middle course, and some who, by God's grace, outdo one another in righteous deeds. This is the greatest blessing.

God has blessed them with? [If this is the case, then let them be as jealous as they can be] We gave Abraham's descendants [the Ishmaelites] our *sharī'ah* and *ḥikmah*, and an illustrious kingdom. So some among them [the Ishmaelites] have professed faith in [this Book] and others who have turned away from it. And sufficient is the furious fire of Hell for such people. (4:51-54)

Readers are advised to look up my explanation of the above mentioned verse in order to understand the verse under discussion. Just as in the above verse, the Ishmaelites are referred to in their collective capacity and there is a mention of they being given the Book and Wisdom and a great kingdom, in a similar manner in the verse under discussion too it is mentioned that this position was bestowed to them in their collective capacity. The Jews were very jealous of this position of theirs and one of the big reasons that they opposed Muḥammad (sws) was that they thought that if his prophethood is established, then the position of religious leadership which they hitherto held would be transferred to their opponents: the Ishmaelites. At many instances, the Qur'ān has informed the Arabs of this ill-intent of the Israelites and has invited them to duly value the status bestowed on them by the Almighty as well as the position for which He has chosen them; they should not let their enemies achieve their objective by opposing it. In a similar way, here too their chosen status is alluded to so that they should give it due importance and not be deprived of it.

Consider next, the words: فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُم مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ. These words point to the individual attitude the Ishmaelites adopted in response to this favour of God. It is stated that, there are three categories of people among them: the first are those who wrong their souls; in other words, they are trying their utmost to oppose it; neither are they accepting it themselves nor letting others accept it. In the above cited verses of Sūrah Nisā, they are mentioned by the words: وَمِنْهُم مَّن صَدَّ عَنْهُ (and others who have turned away from it). This very category is alluded to in the verse under discussion by the words: ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ. The implication is that by opposing the new call they are wronging their souls because they are depriving themselves of God's greatest blessing and leading themselves to Hell. However, as far as the religion of God is concerned, no harm can come to it because of their opposition. In the Qur'ān, the word ظلم generally connotes polytheism. In Sūrah Ṣaffāt the words are: وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ (٣٧: ١١٣) (And We blessed him and Isaac both. And among their [Abraham's and Isaac's] offspring are those who do deeds in a befitting manner and others who clearly sinned against their souls, (37:113)). Our exegetes have generally interpreted

the words الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا of the verse under discussion to refer to the Muslim *ummah* and then have concluded from this without any basis that those who are the wrongdoers and have sinned against themselves shall also be forgiven. I have attempted to explain the true occasion and context of the verse after which no needs remains to refute the view of our exegetes. Narratives ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) and Mujāhid[30] also support my view. These authorities are of the opinion that the words ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ refer to the very people who are mentioned in Sūrah Wāqi‘ah by the expression: أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ (٥٦: ٩).

The expression مِنْهُم مُّقْتَصِدٌ refers to the second category of people. The word مُّقْتَصِدٌ means the “the middle ones.” In other words, they are the people who neither oppose this call of faith nor have the courage to support it. Their lack of opposition is clearly indicative of the fact that they do realize the veracity of this call yet they are not very strongly driven as to openly support it while disregarding any opposition. By using this expression for them, the Qur’ān has created hope that they are not the ones who will be deprived from this blessing like the ones of the first category; soon or late, their hesitancy will be dispelled and they will become the ardent supporters of this call.

The expression وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ refers to the third category. Those who belong to this category have such sharp ears for the truth that every call of the truth appeals to them immediately. So strong is their determination and resolve that when something appeals to them, they surmount all the difficulties of this path in one leap. They do not desist from the biggest of sacrifice to support or defend this call. On the contrary, while valiantly facing all adversities to outrun others in the sphere of virtue are even prepared to lay down their lives for it. This is a reference to the foremost in faith (*sābiqūn al-awwālūn*) in the times of the Prophet (sws) whose leader was Abū Bakr (rta).

This third category is qualified by the words بِإِذْنِ اللهِ which means that not every one can be a part of it unless God wants to. This is in fact a reference to the established practice of God which He has set for those who strive in His cause and those who desist in this regard. I have referred to this established practice at many places in this *tafsīr*.

The words ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ delineate the status which this category of people will be bestowed with. At the same time, there exists in these words a subtle exhortation for the second category: they still have time to come forward and make an effort to take their share in this great blessing; they should leave aside hesitancy and boldly take this step. I

30. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 3, 556.

will content myself to insinuations here. God willing, all its aspects will be discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah Wāqi‘ah.

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ (٣٣)[31]

Here at the end, the reward of these valiant people is mentioned: for them will be gardens of Eden in which they will be admitted to. In other words, their stay and amusement in these gardens will not be temporary: it will be forever. The passive verb يُحَلَّوْنَ signifies honour and respect. The mention bracelets of gold and pearls and their silk-apparel is merely to give us some idea of the favours of Paradise. The reality of these things is only known to God. One will only have an idea of them when one sees them in the Hereafter. In the earlier ages, kings would wear pearls and bracelets of gold. For this reason, to give an idea of the apparel of Paradise, these expressions are used.

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٣٤) الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِن فَضْلِهِ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ (٣٥)[32]

The verse implies that when the dwellers of Paradise will see all the promises of God have materialized, they will spontaneously express gratitude to Him and say that the promises for which they lived and died have been fulfilled far beyond their expectations; all their sorrows have vanished; they neither have any regrets of the past nor any fears of the future; their Lord Who is merciful has forgiven them and has accepted and acknowledged all their virtues. At another place, this gratitude by the dwellers of Paradise is stated thus: وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠: ١٠) (And their last statement will be: “Gratitude to God the Lord of the worlds,” (10:10)).

The word دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ refers to an abode of eternal residence. They would exclaim that before that they were in an abode of limited residence and always considered it so; the Almighty, out of His grace, has now placed them in an everlasting abode; neither do they face any toil nor any tiredness nor any sorrow. It may be kept in mind that even the most

31. For them shall be gardens of Eden which they shall enter. There they shall be made to wear bracelets of gold and pearls, and there their apparel shall be of silk.

32. And they will say: “Gratitude be to God Who has taken away grief from us. Indeed, our Lord is Forgiving and One Who accepts; Who through His grace has admitted us to this mansion of residence. Here we shall face no difficulty nor be inflicted with weariness.”

blissful of states can make a person sorrowful if it is not changed and added to according to his wish. Such is the nature of God's Paradise that a dweller will be in such multifarious and diverse forms of bliss that he will never feel bored.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يُقْضَى عَلَيْهِمْ فَيَمُوتُوا وَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُم مِّنْ عَذَابِهَا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي كُلَّ كَفُورٍ (٣٦) وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءكُمُ النَّذِيرُ فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ (٣٧)[33]

These verses depict the fate of the disbelievers in Hell. There neither will they be able to live nor will death overtake them to put an end to their torment nor will this torment will be lessened to give them some respite. A word to the effect فَلْيَسْتَرِيْحُوا (so that they receive comfort) is suppressed after مِّنْ عَذَابِهَا because of linguistic considerations.

The words كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي كُلَّ كَفُورٍ imply that what has been said is not specific to the criminals and wrongdoers of the past; every ingrate and wretch will receive the same punishment. The implication is that these people too will deserve the same punishment who at that time were denying the Book of God. This statement has linked the discourse to the situation that existed at the time of its revelation.

The words وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ state that while being in Hell, they will plead to God to grant them respite so that they could go back in the previous world and behave differently from what they had been doing earlier.

The words أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءكُمُ النَّذِيرُ express the answer they will get from God: were they not granted enough respite which was sufficient for them to pay heed to God's reminder; moreover, a messenger too had come to them to warn them; so for what purpose are they asking for respite; no one can now become their supporter; now they will be left to taste the punishment which they deserve.

It is evident from this verse that those whom the Almighty has given

33. As for the disbelievers, for them is the fire of Hell. Neither shall death deliver them, nor shall its torment even be reduced from them. Thus shall We avenge every ungrateful person and they shall cry out there: "Lord! Take us out from here; we will now do pious deeds – different from what we have been doing till now." – Have We not given you enough life so that anyone who would like to be reminded in it can be reminded? And an informer also reached you. So taste this torment. No one shall help the wrongdoers.

enough life span and the truth has also been conclusively communicated to them through a warner, no concession will be given to them. However, those people who died or were killed before they reached mature age will be treated with relative lenience.

إِنَّ اللهَ عَالِمُ غَيْبِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٣٨)[34]

Two things are evident from this verse: Firstly, God is aware of all the secrets of the heavens and the earth; hence no one should regard these warnings as bluff; they are bound to materialize one day before everyone. Secondly, the Almighty is also aware of the lies spoken by people who want respite so that they can do righteous deeds: if these people are given this chance they will again do what they used to do.

Section V: Verses (39-45)

The Idolaters of Arabia are threatened in the succeeding verses that they are not the first people in this land; they are in fact the successors of the previous nations: so they should seek a lesson from their circumstances and the fate they met. If these nations, in spite of being more powerful than them were destroyed because of rejecting their respective messenger, how will they save themselves from the wrath of God? The law of God is the same for all; it cannot be changed for anyone. They should remember that it is not their deities who are holding the heavens and the earth intact; it is God Who is holding them together. If God let goes of them no one else can hold them together. If in spite of their rebelliousness God is giving them respite, then this should not lead them to wrong conclusions. God is not hasty in seizing people; however, when He does, no one can escape His grasp.

In this regard, they have also been warned that they used to swear oaths that if a messenger comes to them, they will become the most rightly-guided nation of the world; however, when the messenger actually came, out of sheer arrogance, they set about to oppose him and to conspire against him day and night; whereas, the fact of the matter is that the very people who weave the web of conspiracy get caught in this web.

A little deliberation shows that in this last section of the *sūrah*, the verse-rhymes have changed from the previous sections. This sudden change in intonation points to the change in the tone and pitch of the speaker and this in itself is meant to direct the attention of the addressee

34. God knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth. Indeed, He fully knows the secrets found in the hearts.

to some new aspect.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (٣٩) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْهُ بَلْ إِن يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا (٤٠) إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَن تَزُولَا وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٤١) وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَى مِنْ إِحْدَى الْأُمَمِ فَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا (٤٢) اسْتِكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا (٤٣) أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا (٤٤) وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِن دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاء أَجَلُهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا (٤٥)

It is He who has made you a successor in the earth. So he who professes disbelief will bear its consequences and for the disbeliever his disbelief in the sight of His Lord will only increase His wrath. (39)

Say: "Behold the partners you invoke besides God. Show me what part of the earth have they created! Do they have a share in the heavens? Whether We have given them a scripture so that they have some evident proof? In fact, these wrongdoers are making false promises with one another. (40)

It is God who keeps the heavens and the earth from falling. And should they fall, none can hold them back but Him. Indeed, He is Gracious and Forgiving. (41)

And they have sworn solemnly by God that if a warner should come to warn them, they would accept his guidance more readily than did all the other nations. Yet when a warner came to them, then this only increased their aversion and evil scheming because of being arrogant in the land. And evil schemes capture only him who makes these evil schemes. Thus they are not waiting but for the established practice of God which materialized for those before them. So you will neither find any change

in the established practice of God nor will you find it to cease. Have they not travelled through the land to see the fate of those who were before them even though they were far mightier than they? And there is nothing in the heavens and the earth beyond the power of God. All-Knowing is He, and Mighty. (42-44)

And if God was to punish people immediately for their deeds, He would not have left a single living being on the earth. But He gives them respite till a prescribed time. So when this time expires, God Himself is watching all His servants. (45)

Explanation

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (٣٩)[35]

This verse warns the Quraysh. They are told that the political leadership they enjoy in the land of Arabia is neither because of their own effort nor are they the first ones to acquire it. Many nations which preceded them were destroyed by the Almighty because of their arrogance and disbelief. They have now succeeded these nations; however, if they too adopt the same attitude as these nations, then they should be prepared to meet the same fate. God's barometer of justice regarding the rise and fall of nations is unflinching and unbiased. They will repeat the history written by the nations whose accounts have been narrated to them. This topic is discussed in detail in verse 165 of Sūrah An'ām and verse 100 of Sūrah A'rāf.

The words فَمَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا of the verse imply that the disbelief of a person cannot harm God in any way; on the contrary, it is the person who professes disbelief who bears its dire consequences. God is not dependent on anyone; it is the people who are dependent on God. If they adhere to disbelief they will augment the wrath of God and not harm God and this will lead them to destruction both in this world and in the next.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْهُ بَلْ إِن يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُم

35. It is He who has made you a successor in the earth. So he who professes disbelief will bear its consequences and for the disbeliever his disbelief in the sight of His Lord will only increase His wrath.

بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا (٤٠)[36]

This verse directs their attention to the baselessness of their deities whom they associate with God and on whose basis they do not fear Him. The word أَرَأَيْتُمْ on such occasions signifies amazement and disgust. They are asked that if these deities have created anything in the heavens and the earth, then they should show it to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) or inform him if they have any share in governing the heavens.

In the section أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْهُ بَلْ إِن يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا the style of address has shifted from direct to indirect; this has increased the amazement and disgust expressed previously. It is said that if they cannot substantiate any role for their deities in the heavens and the earth, then on what grounds have they made them associates of God? Has God given them a book in which He has pointed out His partners and it is a result of this proof that they have made these partners?

The words بَلْ إِن يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا imply that none of the above options is correct. Neither do they have any argument in support of their deities nor any sanction; in fact, such people who wrong their souls are misleading one another without any argument or sanction. They wrongly state that such and such an idol has such and such powers and worshipping them entails such and such blessings. All these are false promises made to them by their leaders.

إِنَّ اللهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَن تَزُولَا وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٤١)[37]

The verse implies that if these people are in the deception that their deities will protect them from the punishment with which they are being threatened, then they should remember that it is only the Almighty Who holds the heavens and the earth in their orbits. If He loosens their reins, no one has the power to hold them and in the blink of an eye all this system will crash.

The words إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا imply that in spite of their arrogance and haughtiness if God gives respite to people, it is because He is Gracious

36. Say: "Behold the partners you invoke besides God. Show me what part of the earth have they created! Do they have a share in the heavens? Whether We have given them a scripture so that they have some evident proof? In fact, these wrongdoers are making false promises with one another.

37. It is God who keeps the heavens and the earth from falling. And should they fall, none can hold them back but Him. Indeed, He is Gracious and Forgiving.

and Merciful. He does not show haste in punishing them He ignores them and gives them respite so that people who want to are afforded with an opportunity to mend their ways.

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَى مِنْ إِحْدَى الْأُمَمِ فَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا (٤٢)[38]

Since the people of Arabia were unlettered ie. not conversant with the *sharī'ah*, the People of the Book, in particular, the Jews regarded them to be inferior; so much so, their jurists had issued an edict that usurping the wealth placed in the trust of the unlettered and to charge interest from them was absolutely okay. I have referred to these self-proclaimed edicts while explaining the verse: لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الأُمِّيِّينَ سَبِيلٌ (٣: ٧٥) (We shall not be held answerable in the matters of the Unlettered, (3:75)). When the Idolaters of Arabia would hear such comments of the Jews, a feeling of inferiority would naturally arise in them, and in response these Idolaters would on oath arrogantly swear before them that if ever a messenger is sent to them, they will prove themselves to be more rightly guided than other nations.

It may be kept in consideration that the predictions found in the previous scriptures regarding the advent of the last messenger clearly state that he will come in the Ishmaelites, as is explained in the exegesis of Sūrah A'rāf. Though the Jewish scholars would hide these predictions, there were scholars among them in particular the Christians who were waiting for a messenger among the Arabs. The Qur'ān has referred to this in very commendable words thus: وَإِذَا سَمِعُواْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُواْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (٥: ٨٣) (And when they listen to that which was revealed to the Messenger of God, you see their eyes shed tears because of recognizing the truth, (5:83)). Because of such scholars, there existed a tradition among the Ishmaelites as well that a messenger will be sent to them. They even expressed this before the Jews that if a messenger comes to them they will not prove meek and weak like the Jews and in fact take lead in accepting his guidance. While reminding them of this commitment of theirs, the Qur'ān has expressed sorrow: they used to make tall claims of helping and supporting the messenger; yet his advent only increased their aversion. Thus attitude of theirs is

38. And they have sworn solemnly by God that if a warner should come to warn them, they would accept his guidance more readily than did all the other nations. Yet when a warner came to them, then this only increased their aversion and evil scheming because of being arrogant in the land.

also mentioned in Sūrah Ṣāffāt in the following words:

وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ لَوْ أَنَّ عِندَنَا ذِكْرًا مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٧: ١٦٧–١٧٠)

And indeed these people used to say: "Had we any teaching of the earlier generations we would have been among God's chosen servants." But they rejected it; so they shall soon come to know. (37:167-170)

اسْتِكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللهِ تَحْوِيلًا (٤٣)[39]

The verse states the reason that has led these people to show aversion and disgust to the messenger of God: arrogance. The truth is fully evident to them; yet they are not willing to sacrifice at any cost the position of authority and leadership they hold. For this reason, they are bent upon opposing this blatant truth. They fear that if they accept the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) they will lose this position.

The words الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ are co-ordinated to نُفُورًا. In other words, when the messenger with whom they claimed adherence arrived, they became his ardent enemies and became involved in filthy conspiracies against him in order to harm him. Since the word مَكْرُ (scheme) also occurs in a positive meaning, the word السَّيِّئُ (evil) qualifies it to refer to the nature of these schemes. In verse 10 also, their evil conspiracies and the fate they will meet is alluded to.

The words وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ imply that anyone who conspires against the truth in fact conspires against his own self. He apparently weaves this web for others; but he himself is the first one to get caught in it. He who opposes a person who guides people to the truth wanders away from the truth and ruins his fate. He cannot harm others by this conspiracy without God's permission but leads himself come what may to destruction.

In the section of the verse فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ the word يَنظُرُونَ means "waiting" and in سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ certain words are suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles. If all these suppressions are

39. Because of being arrogant in the land. And evil schemes capture only him who makes these evil schemes. Thus they are not waiting but for the established practice of God which materialized for those before them. So you will neither find any change in the established practice of God nor will you find it to cease.

unfolded, the overall statement would be to the effect: فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ اللهِ فِي الْأَوَّلِينَ. In other words, if because of their arrogance and aversion from the truth, these people have taken to opposing it and conspiring against it, then this means that they are waiting for the established practice of God which materialized for other nations to materialize for themselves as well. And just as these nations were destroyed for denying their respective messenger, they too will be destroyed.

The words فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللهِ تَحْوِيلًا emphatically sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws). He is told that if this is what these people are waiting for, then he should rest assured that the practice of God neither changes nor fails to materialize. By stating that it does not change, the implication is that it is the same and equal for all nations; it is not possible that the attitude which led a nation to doom if adopted by another not lead it to doom as well. By stating that it does not fail to materialize, the implication is that when the time comes it will happen at all cost. No one will be able to stop it or change its course.

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَمَا كَانَ اللهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا (٤٤)[40]

Attention is directed in this verse to the signs and remnants of previous nations found in Arabia on which the practice of God materialized. They are asked whether they have ever roamed about in their country to witness the remnants of their predecessor nations who were far mightier than they themselves but met the same fate for denying the prophets of God.

It is evident from the words أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا that they have in fact moved about in the land a lot and have passed by the ruins of the nations that were divinely punished but they never reflected on what led these nations to this fate. Yet, what was really required was to seek a lesson from them. They still have the time to observe these ruins and learn a lesson from them. As for might and power, the Quraysh cannot match them the slightest but when the Almighty seized them, they could not escape from His grasp. There is nothing in the heavens and earth which is beyond His grasp. His knowledge embraces all and nothing is beyond His observation. At the same time, He has power over everything

40. Have they not travelled through the land to see the fate of those who were before them even though they were far mightier than they? And there is nothing in the heavens and the earth beyond the power of God. All-Knowing is He, and Mighty.

and nothing is beyond His power. The implication is that who can escape from someone who is perfect and all-embracing in His knowledge and power.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِن دَابَّةٍ وَلَـٰكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاء أَجَلُهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا (٤٥)[41]

This verse directs our attention to another aspect of the established practice of God under discussion: such wrongdoers shall definitely be punished yet the Almighty never seizes people immediately for their misdeeds. No one could have stopped Him if He wanted to do so; He can obliterate every living being from the face of the earth; However, He is Gracious and Forgiving. Thus He gives respite to people till an appointed time. The reason is to give an opportunity to those who want to repent and mend their ways and to not leave the obdurate with any excuse. Once this time expires, the Almighty will assess their fate.

Words to the effect عَلَى عَجَلٍ are suppressed after بِمَا كَسَبُوا. What is suppressed is evident from the words: وَلَـٰكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ.

With the grace of God, this brings us to the end of this *sūrah*: فلحمد لله على ذالك (so gratitude be to God for this).

Raḥmānābād
4th February 1975

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41. And if God was to punish people immediately for their deeds, He would not have left a single living being on the earth. But He gives them respite till a prescribed time. So when this time expires, the God Himself is watching all His servants.

Sūrah Yāsīn

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

There is no essential difference between the central theme of this *sūrah* and that of the last two *sūrahs* of this group. This *sūrah* also discusses the topics of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter discussed in the previous *sūrahs*. However, there exists a difference in them with respect to conciseness and comprehensiveness and in the nature of reasoning. Some of the topics discussed in the earlier *sūrahs* are further substantiated through arguments drawn from history and human nature. The *sūrah* begins with an affirmation of prophethood – the topic on which the previous *sūrah* ended. If one deliberates on this *sūrah* with regard to the philosophy of religion it becomes evident that like the previous *sūrahs* it is based on gratitude and what it entails.

In the following paragraphs, an analysis of the *sūrah* discourse is presented; the central theme of the *sūrah* and its coherence will *inshallāh* will become evident from it.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-12): The prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) is substantiated and he is given assurance that the Qur'ān replete with wisdom is the greatest evidence to the fact that he is a messenger of God and is calling people towards the straight the path. The Qur'ān is a great favour from the Almighty and powerful God to people who till then were deprived of any divine guidance and were wandering astray. It is their mere misfortune that because of arrogance they are denying it. Their past traditions and future desires have become an impediment to them; for this reason, they are neither learning any lesson from the past nor are they caring for the future. The Prophet (sws) is told to not be worried for such unworried people. He should give glad tidings of a great reward to those who fear God and are prepared to listen to be counseled. He should leave the matter of those who do not listen to God. He has recorded all their deeds and is enough to deal with them.

Verses (13-32): In order to make the Quraysh learn a lesson, an example of a city is cited where two messengers were sent by God to warn its people. When they did not listen to these two messengers, the Almighty sent a third individual to help these messengers; however, they did not

even pay heed to him. The signs which manifested themselves during this time to warn them were regarded as bad luck brought by the messengers and threatened to stone them for this crime. Finally, the Almighty destroyed this city through His punishment.

Verses (23-44): An allusion is made to some of the signs of God's power, wisdom, providence and mercy found in this universe. It is stated that all these signs entail gratitude to God and the essential requirement of this gratitude is monotheism. These signs also entail a day of reward and punishment.

Verses (45-50): It is stated that when people are warned of God's punishment and asked to save themselves from it by spending for His cause, they stubbornly demand this punishment and further say that why should they spend on those whom God has deprived of His blessings. These people should remember that when God intends to bring His punishment He will not need any preparation; it will come in the blink of an eye and catch everyone unaware.

Verses (51-65): The events of the Day of Judgement are portrayed and the fates of the believers and rejecters are depicted.

Verses (66-68): Those who were demanding the punishment are warned that they should benefit from the abilities of sight and hearing which the Almighty has blessed them with and also use their intellect. If they do not benefit from these abilities God can also disfigure them, and this task in not very difficult for Him at all.

Verses (69-83): In this closing section of the *sūrah* what was discussed in the opening one is take up again in a different style. Attention is drawn to some signs of monotheism and the Hereafter and the Prophet (sws) is also assured that his task is to awaken those who are alive; his calls will not effect those who are morally dead.

Section I: Verses (1-12)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

يس (١) وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢) إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣) عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٤) تَنزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ (٥) لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ (٦) لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٧) إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالاً فَهِيَ إِلَى الأَذْقَانِ فَهُم مُّقْمَحُونَ (٨) وَجَعَلْنَا مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ (٩) وَسَوَاء عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠) إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ

الرَّحْمَن بِالْغَيْبِ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ (١١) إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ (١٢)

This is Sūrah Yāsīn. The Wise Qur'ān – bears witness that you are among the messengers, on an absolutely straight path – that has been revealed by the Mighty One, the Merciful so that you may inform a people whose predecessors had not been informed; thus they are heedless. On many of them Our words have come true; so they will not be among the believers. We have put yolks around their necks that reach up to their chins so that they cannot bow their heads. And We have put a barrier in front of them and a barrier behind them. In this manner, We have covered them so that they are not able to see. And it is the same whether or not you warn them: they will never accept faith. You can only warn those who pay heed to counsel and fear the Merciful, though they cannot see Him. So give glad tidings of pardon and a noble reward to such people. Indeed, We will resurrect the dead and We have recorded what they have sent forward and left behind. And We have noted down all things in a clear book. (1-12)

Explanation

يس (١)[1]

These letters are from among the *muqaṭṭa'āt ḥurūf*. They were comprehensively explained at the beginning of Sūrah Baqarah's *tafsīr*. يس is the Qur'ānic name of the *sūrah*. Some people think that it means: يا أيها الإنسان. However, this interpretation has absolutely no substantiation.

وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢) إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣)[2]

Here the letter وَ here signifies an oath. As explained by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his *Al-Im'ān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān* that in Arabic an oath itself signifies bearing witness. The verse thus means: "The Qur'ān replete with wisdom bears witness that you are from among the category of messengers." No one except a messenger is able to produce such a wise and miraculous discourse. It is thus evident that the real miracle of the Qur'ān lies in its wisdom and philosophy. Its linguistic eloquence and articulacy is in addition.

1. This is Sūrah Yāsīn.
2. The Wise Qur'ān – bears witness that you are among the messengers.

عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٤)[3]

This is the second enunciative (*khabar*) after the first one. Its mention without a co-ordinating particle shows that the Qur'ān simultaneously bears witness to two things: Muh@ammad is among the messengers of God and that he is on the straight path and calling people to tread this straight path. The expression صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ is undefined to augment and amplify its purport. It is evident from this usage that the path towards which a person is guided by God and by his intellect and nature is very straight. Those who are evading this straight path have perverted their nature and have stopped using their intellect; for this reason, a straight path appears crooked to them.

تَنزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ (٥)[4]

The word تَنزِيلَ is in the accusative from a suppressed verb. I have explained its meaning in detail at an appropriate place of this exegesis that it also means to reveal something gradually in a thorough and profound manner. The verse in fact directs the attention of the readers to another aspect of the Qur'ān: the powerful and merciful God has revealed it in thorough and profound way so that people should reflect on it and obtain guidance from it regarding the straight path. Here, two attributes of God are mentioned: الْعَزِيز (powerful) and الرَّحِيم (merciful). The first one is for warning and the second one for giving glad tidings. In other words, those who deny this Book should bear in mind that this Book is not the request of an implorer; it is the directive of a powerful and sovereign being that has to be followed at all cost; He will punish all the arrogant. At the same time, He is merciful as well and He has actually revealed this Book to show His mercy. So those of His people who duly value this Book will receive His unbounded mercy and blessings.

لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ (٦)[5]

This verse alludes to the purpose of Qur'ānic revelation. The Almighty has revealed it in a profound and thorough manner because those to whom no prophet of God was sent before Muḥammad (sws) were living in heedlessness. Muḥammad (sws) is told to fully inform them of their

3. On an absolutely straight path.

4. – That has been revealed by the Mighty One, the Merciful.

5. So that you may inform a people whose predecessors had not been informed; thus they are heedless.

fate. Reference here is to the Ishmaelites and the verse actually states the great favour of the Almighty on the *ummiyyīn* in accordance with the invocation of Abraham (sws) and predictions made by the prophets of God. This verse besides sounding these glad tidings to them also warns them that if they do not duly value this favour, they will find this favour replaced with great devastation for them. At another place, this is stated in the following words: لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُم مِّن نَّـذِيرٍ مِّـن قَبْلِـكَ (٢٨: ٤٦) (so that you inform people to whom no warner had come before you, (28:46)).

لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٧)[6]

The word قَـوْل refers to the statement of God given by Him in response to Satan when he had threatened to lead the majority of progeny of Adam's (sws) progeny astray. At that time, God had said: لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّـةِ وَالنَّـاسِ أَجْمَعِـينَ (٣٢: ١٣) (I shall fill Hell with all men and jinn who follow you, (32:13)). While referring to this statement of God, the Prophet (sws) has been assured that his responsibility is to warn people and he should keep doing it; however, he should not expect that every person to accept his message; there will be several on whom God's statement will come true that they will become the firewood Hell because of following Satan; such people will not accept faith; he should not go after such people or be worried about them.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالاً فَهِيَ إِلَى الأَذْقَانِ فَهُم مُّقْمَحُونَ (٨)[7]

This is a portrayal of the arrogance of the people who were not accepting faith; it is as if yolks have been put around their necks which rise up till the chins. The result is that their heads are stuck upwards; they are neither able to bend down nor rise up. The result is that these people are neither able to see the signs found in this earth nor the ones found in the heavens. This state of theirs is ascribed by God to Himself: it is He Who has turned them into this state. The reason for this ascription is that the state of an individual or a group is according an established law of God: people who intentionally evade and deviate from the truth and lead their lives while shutting their eyes to God's signs are punished for this attitude. God makes their desires and evil deeds get the better of them and the result is that no reminder or teaching affects them.

6. On most of them Our words have come true; so they will not be among the believers.

7. We have put yolks around their necks that reach up to their chins so that they cannot bow their heads.

This very law is referred to in Sūrah Muṭaffifīn in the following words: كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٨٣: ١٤) (Certainly not! In fact, the rust of their deeds has settled on their hearts) (83:14).

The word مُقْمَحُ refers to a camel whose head is tied from behind in such a way that it is not able to bend its neck below a certain extent. Exactly same will be the case of a person around whose neck an iron yolk will be put. He too will not be able to bend his head or raise it; his neck will be fixed at a certain angle. This is a depiction of their arrogance, as indicated before. Such people remain unaware of all signs around them and those that lie above and below them and on their right and on their left. They are only aware of their over blown ego.

وَجَعَلْنَا مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ (٩)[8]

This verse is a further explanation of what is just said: God has placed barriers behind them and in front of them and has tied their eyes with a cloth so that they are not able to see anything. In Sūrah Sabā', wonder is expressed at this very state of theirs in the following words: أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُم مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضِ (Have they not seen the heavens and the earth in front of them and behind them? (34:9)). It should also be borne in mind that such arrogant people are slave to their past traditions and future ambitions. Both these things become such a hindrance for them that they are not able to see anything besides them.

وَسَوَاء عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠)[9]

Obviously, such people are afflicted with a severe intellectual and moral malady; hence, to warn them or to not warn them is absolutely useless with regard to the real objective; they never accept faith. If such people are warned it is only to conclusively communicate the truth to them so that they will not be able to present any excuse on the Day of Judgement. Readers are advised to look up the discussion on "sealing the heart" (*khatm al-qulūb*) found at the beginning of my exegesis of Sūrah Baqarah.

إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَن بِالْغَيْبِ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ (١١)[10]

8. And We have put a barrier in front of them and a barrier behind them. In this manner, We have covered them so that they are not able to see.

9. And it is the same whether or not you warn them: they will never accept faith.

10. You can only warn those who pay heed to counsel and fear the Merciful,

The verse states that the Prophet's reminders and teachings will only affect those who hear his advice, reflect on it and open the doors of their hearts to it. Moreover, they would be ones who use their intellect and are not mere slaves of their senses so that until something is visually shown to them they are not ready to accept it. Only that faith is of value to God which is professed by using the faculties of sight, hearing, mind as well as the heart and not after visually observing the facts. The verse implies that the Prophet (sws) should consign the matter of people who want to accept faith after seeing everything to God; however, he should give glad tidings of a noble reward to those who fear God even though they have not seen Him.

I have pointed out at a number of places that fearing God is a consequence of His graciousness. Since He is the Most gracious, it is essential that He reward the pious for their virtue and punish the wrong-doers for their sins. For the manifestation of His graciousness, He has appointed a day for reward and punishment; on this day, His mercy and justice will manifest themselves in their perfect sense.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ (١٢)[11]

This verse is a reminder of the Day of Judgment entailed by His graciousness. It states that a day will come when God will raise to life all the dead and whatever they left behind in this world and whatever they did for the next world is being noted by Him. The purpose is to explain to them that when God is going to raise all the dead and is also noting down all their deeds, then this necessarily means that He will deal with each of them according to his or her deeds. This necessary consequence is not stated here. The first reason for this is that it is evident without its mention. The second reason is that the disbelievers doubted the Day of Judgement with regard to two aspects: firstly, they regarded being raised up to life again as improbable and secondly they reckoned that who can preserve the record of words and deeds of such a large number of people. Once these doubts were cleared, their necessary consequence became self-obvious.

The expression مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ means precisely what is stated at another place as: يُنَبَّأُ الْإِنسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ (٧٥: ١٣) (On that Day, man will be informed what he sent forth and what he left behind. (75:13)). In this

though they cannot see Him. So give glad tidings of pardon and a noble reward to such people.

11. Indeed, We will resurrect the dead and We have recorded what they have sent forward and left behind. And We have noted down all things in a clear book.

world, a person does several deeds for the Hereafter according to his own concept and there are many deeds he does for this world or for those who come after him. The verse says that both these types of deeds are being noted by God.

Consider next, the portion: وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ. The actual meaning of the word إِمَام is "leader, guide and fountainhead." From here this word came to be used for the Book which is a guide and fountainhead for everyone. Thus in verse 17 of Sūrah Hūd and verse 12 of Sūrah Aḥqāf, it is also used for the Torah. In the verse under discussion, it refers to the central register which records the deeds of all people according to which a person will be rewarded or punished. This portion is actually a further explanation of what is said earlier: no one should wrongly think that the Almighty has been careless in recording the words and deeds of people. This is not correct; in fact, everything has been recorded in a clear register. It will present the minutest of deeds and words of everyone.

Section II: Verses (13-32)

In the succeeding verses, an example of a city is cited before the Quraysh in order to explain to them the fate of those who deny messengers of God. The Almighty sent two of His messengers to warn the inhabitants of this city; however, they denied both of them. After that, the Almighty helped these two by a third warner; but the inhabitants of that city showed indifference to him. The signs that manifested themselves to warn them were regarded as bad-luck brought by the messengers and threatened to stone them. Finally, the Almighty sent a decisive punishment on them that totally routed them. The Qur'ān has not named the city. Hence the question arises which city is it referring to? Our exegetes are of the opinion that the reference is to Antioch and the messengers mentioned here are not the messengers of God; they are in fact envoys of Jesus (sws) who were selected by him from amongst his disciples to go to warn the people of Antioch. The Qur'ān commentaries I have at my disposal all state this. Though Ibn Kathīr has raised many questions on this view and thereby challenged its veracity yet ultimately he has also adopted this view since he was not able to find any other view in this regard. In my opinion, this view is baseless because of a number of reasons. They are:

1. The way these messengers are mentioned here and the capacity in which they presented themselves before people shows that they are not envoys of Jesus (sws); rather they are envoys of God. Thus for example,

it is said: إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ (٣٦: ١٤). (When We sent to them two messengers, but when they rejected both We strengthened them with a third. They said: "We have been sent to you as messengers," (36:14)). Further it is said that when people rejected them by saying that they are human beings like them, they replied on oath thus: رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ (٣٦: ١٦) (Our Lord bears witness that we have come to you as messengers, (36:16)). If these people were envoys of Jesus (sws), why has the Almighty so explicitly and categorically ascribed their sending to Himself? If they had invited and preached people in their own capacity, why would they reject them because of being human beings? If the addressees of a messenger rejected them because of being human beings, it was because they claimed to be messengers of God. The addressees would contend that if God had to send a messenger why would He choose human beings like them for this purpose? Why did He not choose His angels or some other superior creatures for this purpose?

2. If this incident took place during the time of Jesus (sws) and resulted in the destruction of Antioch, then it should have been mentioned in the Gospels and Bible history since it was a very prominent incident. However, neither the Gospels nor Bible history mention it. In fact, history bears witness to the contrary; it is reported that the people of Antioch took lead in professing faith in Jesus (sws).

3. This incident is mentioned before the Quraysh as an established historical incident. Hence the word is defined by the definite article ال. The expression أصحاب قرية is not used; on the contrary, the expression أصحاب الْقرية is used. Context and occasion also demand that some known incident be narrated because the purpose of narrating it is to warn the Quraysh. This objective can only be achieved if the referred to incident is a known and famous one not one of which they are not even aware of.

4. Jesus (sws) was a messenger sent to the Israelites. Hence, he neither invited other nations to his message nor sent his disciples to them. He in fact stopped his disciples from going to other nations. He is reported to have said: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matthew, 15:24). For other nations, his words are: "First let the children eat all they want for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs," (Mark, 7:27). Hence, the question arises as to whom in Antioch did he send his disciples? Obviously, he could not have sent them to other nations. As far as the Israelites are concerned, they did not reject Jesus (sws) on the ground that he was a human, so why would they reject his disciples on this ground? They regarded the prophets they

believed in to be humans; thus they could not have raised this question. Consequently, they raised all kinds of questions and worked all kinds of mischief against the propethood of Muḥammad (sws); yet they never objected that he was a human. On the contrary, when the Quraysh raised this objection, the Qur'ān presented the Israelites as evidence and told the Quraysh to ask them whether all the prophets and messengers sent by God were humans or not.

5. It is mentioned ahead that after rejecting these messengers, these people were visited by a decisive punishment that totally routed them. The words are: إِن كَانَتْ إِلاَّ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُـمْ خَامِـدُونَ (٣٦: ٢٩) (It was just a shout so that they were routed instantaneously, (36:29)). I have stated several times in this exegesis that as per the established practice of God, such a decisive punishment is only sent by Him to people who deny His messengers even after the truth is conclusively communicated to them. Regarding the Jews, it should be kept in mind that no such punishment afflicted them as was afflicted to nations before them for denying their respective messengers; their punishment took the form of eternal curse from God till the Day of Judgement. This punishment is the sternest of all punishments as a result of which they will continue to live in humiliation and disgrace in this world, and more humiliation awaits them in the Hereafter. I have already explained this in the exegesis of Sūrah A'rāf and Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl.

The various aspects of weakness of this view are very clear. There are certain other aspects which will be discussed ahead in the explanation of the verses. In my opinion, the reference is to Egypt where the Pharaoh was divinely punished for denying Moses (sws), Aaron (sws) and a true believer. Arguments of this view will be presented ahead when the explanation of the verses is discussed.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلاً أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (١٣) إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ (١٤) قَالُوا مَا أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنزَلَ الرَّحْمن مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ تَكْذِبُونَ (١٥) قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ (١٦) وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلاَّ الْبَلاَغُ الْمُبِينُ (١٧) قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٨) قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ أَئِن ذُكِّرْتُم بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ (١٩) وَجَاء مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢٠)

اتَّبِعُوا مَن لاَّ يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٢١) وَمَا لِي لاَ أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٢) أَأَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِن يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَن بِضُرٍّ لاَّ تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يُنقِذُونِ (٢٣) إِنِّي إِذًا لَّفِي ضَلاَلٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٤) إِنِّي آمَنتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ (٢٥) قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦) بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (٢٧) وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِن بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُندٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَمَا كُنَّا مُنزِلِينَ (٢٨) إِن كَانَتْ إِلاَّ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ (٢٩) يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلاَّ كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُون (٣٠) أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّنْ الْقُرُونِ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لاَ يَرْجِعُونَ (٣١) وَإِن كُلٌّ لَّمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ (٣٢)

And recount to them the example of people of the city when the messengers came to them; when We sent to them two messengers; but they rejected both; then We strengthened them with a third. So they said to the people: "We have come to you as those sent." People replied: "You are but mortals like ourselves. And the Merciful has revealed nothing; your claim is absolutely false." (13-15)

They said: "Our Lord bears witness that we have come to you as messengers. And our duty is only to deliver clearly." People said: "We regard you to bring bad luck; if you do not desist we will stone you and inflict on you a painful sorrow." The messengers replied: "Your bad luck is with you. Do you regard this to be bad luck that you have been reminded? In fact, you yourselves are great transgressors." (16-19)

And a man came running from the far end of the city. He said: "My People! Follow the messengers. Follow those who ask no reward from you and are also rightly guided. And why should I not worship Him Who has created me and to Whom you shall all be returned? Should I worship other gods than Him? If the Merciful wants to afflict me with harm, neither their intercession will be of benefit to me, nor will they be able to save me. Indeed, I should then be in evident error. I believe in your Lord; so hear me." It was said: "Enter Paradise." He exclaimed: "Would that my people knew that my Lord forgave me and made me among the honourable." (20-27)

And after him, We did not send down any army from the heavens on his people nor were We the senders. It was just a shout so that they were routed instantaneously. Alas for My slaves! They only made fun of every messenger that came to them. Have they not reflected that there have been many nations before them whom We destroyed. Never shall they now return to them. Indeed, all of them shall be brought before Us. (28-32)

Explanation

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلاً أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (١٣)[12]

The antecedent of the pronoun in لَهُـم is the Quraysh. The definite article ال on الْقَرْيَـةِ shows that the addressees were aware of it in their minds. Indications mentioned in subsequent verses show that it refers to Egypt whose anecdote has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles so that the Quraysh can learn a lesson from it. They well knew the details of this. The words إِذْ جَاءهَـا الْمُرْسَـلُونَ are meant to direct the attention of the addressees of this verse to the circumstances when the messengers were sent to them. The verse states that the Prophet (sws) should recount the anecdote of the people of the city before his addressees to inform them that they too will meet the fate met by these people of the city if they adopt their ways.

إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ (١٤)[13]

This verse explains the previous one regarding the sending of the messengers. The Almighty initially sent two messengers to them but they rejected these messengers. The Almighty then helped these messengers with a third person whereby these messengers called on the people that they have come to them from God and that they should listen to what they say to them and obey it.

The word اثْنَيْنِ obviously refers to Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). In the history of prophethood, there is only once instance when two messengers were simultaneously sent by God to a people. The reasons for this elaborate arrangement have been discussed in the previous *sūrahs*. When the Pharaoh and his followers rejected them, the Almighty sent a third person to their aid.

Who was this third person? In my opinion, it refers to the true believer from among the followers of the Pharaoh whose heroics have been mentioned subsequently in this anecdote and also at other instances in the Qur'ān particularly in Sūrah Mu'min. It is evident from what this true believer did while fearlessly supporting and valiantly helping Moses (sws) that he occupies the same status among the followers of Moses (sws) as the one occupied by Abū Bakr (rta) among the followers of

12. And recount to them the example of people of the city when the messengers came to them.

13. When We sent to them two messengers; but they rejected both; then We strengthened them with a third. So they said to the people: "We have come to you as those sent."

Muḥammad (sws). Though he was not a messenger in the technical sense, yet he undertook a fearless effort to defend and support the messengers. Thus, it is evident from the very words of the Qur'ān that he is not mentioned in the capacity of a messenger; he is in fact mentioned as a special supporter of them.

The Qur'ān has introduced him in verse 20 ahead and has also referred to his last memorable speech that he delivered in support of Moses (sws).

Deliberation on this introduction and speech will substantiate my deduction.

Thus for example, he is introduced as: وَجَاء مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى (٣٦: ٢٠) (And a man came running from the far end of the city, (36:20)). In precisely the same words, he is introduced in Sūrah Qaṣaṣ: وَجَاء رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا مُوسَى إِنَّ الْمَلَأَ يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٢٨: ٢٠) (A person came running from the far end of the city and said: Moses! The high ups of the government are discussing with one another that you be put to death; so go away from here; I am from among your well wishers. (28:20)). This incident took place when Moses (sws) had killed an Egyptian and government officials were conspiring to execute him. At that time, this true believer informed Moses (sws) of this conspiracy and asked him to go away to some place. After this, Moses (sws) migrated to Madyan.

One example of the help and support offered by this true believer is coming up in the succeeding verses. Besides this, the Qur'ān has referred to a number of his feats. It is evident from verse 40 of Sūrah Mu'min that he belonged to the royal family and was a great advocate of the truth. He had sympathy for Moses (sws) even before he was assigned prophethood. Thus, in the above cited verses of Sūrah Qaṣaṣ, it is evident that when he came to know that Moses' life was in danger, he was very perturbed and immediately ran to him to inform him of this danger. Similarly, after Moses (sws) made claim to prophethood when the Pharaoh and his courtiers decided to kill him, this true believer delivered a speech in the court of the Pharaoh in the presence of all his courtiers. This speech is cited by the Qur'ān in Sūrah Mu'min. Presented below is this speech in my own words. Its reading will reveal the status and position of this person and as well as the nature of his support and help which the Qur'ān has referred to here. The words below are based on verses 26-45 of Sūrah Mu'min:

> The Pharaoh said to his courtiers: "Let me slay Moses; if he is truthful let him call his Lord. I fear that he might change your religion and spread anarchy in the country." Moses said: "I take

refuge with my Lord and your Lord from the evil of every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning."

But a believer from the Pharaoh's family who had till then hidden his faith, said: "Would you slay a man merely because he says: 'my Lord is God?' even though he has also brought to you very clear signs from your Lord. If his claim is false, then its evil consequences will afflict none but him. And if he is speaking the truth, a part at least of what he is threatening you with will visit you. God never lets him succeed who is a blatant liar and a transgressor. O People of My Nation! Today you are dominant in the land; but who will save us from the torment of God if it visits us tomorrow?"

The Pharaoh said: "I am giving my calculated opinion and remember that I am guiding you towards exactly the straight path."

And he who had embraced faith said: "O People of My Nation! I fear the same punishment will befall you as what befell the previous nations – the people of Noah, the 'Ād, and the Thamūd, and those who came after them. And God does not like to see His servants being oppressed.

O People of My Nation! I fear for you the Day of great upheaval – the day you will turn and flee and there will be none to save you from the wrath of God. Remember that he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him. Before this, Joseph came to you with clear signs but you only kept doubting what he brought until when he died you thought that after him God will never send another messenger." In this manner does God lead astray those who exceed bounds and are afflicted with doubts, ie those who dispute God's revelations without any argument that has reached them are deeply hated by God and by the believers. In this manner does God seal the heart of every arrogant tyrant.

Pharaoh said: "O Hāmān! Build me a tower that I may peep in the edges of the heavens to see where the Lord of Moses is; I regard him to be a complete liar."

……...

And he who had embraced faith said: "My people! Follow me; I am guiding you to the right path. My people! The life of this world is but a fleeting one; the real abode is the life to come. He who commits an

evil shall receive in exchange what is similar to it and he who does a good deed, whether man or woman, then it is such people who will enter Paradise where they will receive innumerable blessings.

And my people! What is the matter; I call you towards salvation and you call me to the Fire? You urge me to reject God and associate partners with Him of which I know nothing. And I call you to the Almighty, the Forgiving One – Indeed, the ones to whom you call me to neither have a say in this world nor in the next. And all of us have to return to God. And those who transgress bounds are the ones who shall be the firewood of Hell. Very soon you will understand the things I am telling you. I consign my matter to God.

Indeed, God is watching over His servants. Thus God delivered him from the evil conspiracies of the people and an evil punishment surrounded the Pharaoh's people.

This speech was delivered by the true believer to the House of Lords of Egypt before all the courtiers and nobles. It was delivered at the time when the Pharaoh had presented his suggestion to kill Moses (sws) and tried to convince his courtiers in its favour. Till that time he had hidden his faith. However, when this decisive moment arrived, he revealed his true identity. Then what he said in support of Moses (sws) before the Pharaoh and his nobles and the arguments he presented and the fearless nature in which he spoke has no parallel except in the history of prophets of God and the righteous. It should also be kept in mind that he was not an ordinary person; he was a noble of the royal family; hence his advice could not have been regarded to be one given in bias for the Israelites. These courtiers had indeed blamed Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) for inciting rebellion among the Israelites; but how could they have disillusioned their masses about a voice of truth that had arisen from a person from their own selves. It is this shinning feat and ever-famous exploit of this great person that is mentioned by Almighty in the words: فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ (so We helped [them] with a third). He was obviously not a messenger in the technical sense the way Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) were. Yet he was the most powerful, the most fearless, the most righteous and the most sincere companion of these two. That is why the Almighty has given him the position of the third of the three.

The words فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ spoken by all the three in the plural does not necessitate that all the three are messengers of the same status. This linguistic style is one in which the dominant element is implied. People who belong to the same embassy are not ambassadors of equal

status; yet since they share responsibilities, they can present themselves in this capacity before people. It should be kept in mind that only Moses (sws) was the real messenger. Aaron (sws) too was not the primary messenger; he was only a helping-messenger to Moses (sws). Similarly, this third person was not a messenger; he was the most courageous supporter of these messengers; however, he had taken upon himself the responsibility of preaching of Moses (sws); he was calling upon his nation to stop following evil leaders and to instead follow Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) and himself. For this reason, the Almighty regarded him in this category of messengers.

قَالُوا مَا أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنزَلَ الرَّحْمن مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ تَكْذِبُونَ (١٥)[14]

This is the same objection which rejecters of every messenger of God raised. They would say that these messengers are human beings like them; how can they be messengers of God; if God wanted to send a messenger He would have selected some superior creature for this purpose and not human beings like them. This objection is cited by the Qur'ān at numerous occasions from the tongue of the rejecters. The Pharaoh and his courtiers too raised this objection on Moses (sws), and it was this very objection which the Quraysh raised against Muḥammad (sws).

The words وَمَا أَنزَلَ الرَّحْمن مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ تَكْذِبُونَ imply that the Prophet's claim that God has sent His revelation or Book to him is absolutely false; God has not sent revealed anything.

قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ (١٦) وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلاَّ الْبَلاَغُ الْمُبِينُ (١٧)[15]

The words رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ signify an oath. I have explained this style at another instance. In response to the rejection of their respective followers, these messengers swore on oath that they have been sent by God. Just as in verse 14 the word مُرْسَلُونَ occurs with respect to the dominant element, here too it occurs similarly for the same reason.

The words وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلاَّ الْبَلاَغُ الْمُبِينُ sound an admonition to their people: if they want to deny, they should keep denying; they said to them that the only responsibility they have from God is to present to them the word of God in a clear and distinct manner; they cannot force it down their

14. People replied: "You are but mortals like ourselves. And the Merciful has revealed nothing; your claim is absolutely false."

15. They said: "Our Lord bears witness that we have come to you as messengers. And our duty is only to deliver clearly."

throats. They further said to them that if they do not listen to what they say, they will suffer its consequences and they themselves would have fulfilled their obligation.

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٨)[16]

I have presented my research on the word تَطَيَّر at an appropriate place of this exegesis. Here it means to regard something as a bad omen and one that brings bad luck.

In other words, instead of learning a lesson from the calamities which struck the people of Egypt during the time these messengers preached there, they regarded them be bad omens from Moses (sws) and his followers. They contended that these calamities have not visited them because of their deeds as Moses (sws) and his companions were alleging; they have visited them because of the evil and erroneous message preached by him which has angered their deities. At the same time, these people threatened Moses (sws) and his companions that if they do not desist from this preaching of wrong beliefs they will stone them to death in order to protect their deities. Also, they will inflict even more harm on them. This topic is also discussed in Sūrah A'rāf in the following words: وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَونَ بِالسِّنِينَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّن الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَـذَّكَّرُونَ فَـإِذَا جَـاءتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُواْ لَنَا هَـذِهِ وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُواْ بِمُوسَى وَمَن مَّعَهُ (٧: ١٣٠-١٣١) (And indeed We inflicted the people of the Pharaoh drought and shortness of fruits that they may pay heed; so whenever their circumstances would be good, they said: "Only we have this right [over them]." And if any calamity struck them, they called it to be bad luck brought by Moses and his companions. (7:130-131))

قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ أَئِن ذُكِّرْتُم بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ (١٩)[17]

Research on the word طَـائِر has been presented at an appropriate place of this exegesis. Here it means "misfortune." This is the reply given by the messengers: these people try to find the causes of the misfortune in others; the fact is that they themselves have wrecked their fortunes. Whatever is happening to them is the result of their own beliefs and deeds. Instead of calling others as criminals, they should do some soul-

16. People said: "We regard you to bring bad luck; if you do not desist we will stone you and inflict on you a painful sorrow."

17. The messengers replied: "Your bad luck is with you. Do you regard this to be bad luck that you have been reminded? In fact, you yourselves are great transgressors."

searching and evaluate their beliefs and deeds.

The words أَئِن ذُكِّرْتُم mean that if they are calling these messengers as ones who have brought misfortune to them, then is it because of this sin that they have been reminded by these messengers and made aware of their good and evil.

The words بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ imply that it is the height of their arrogance that by crossing the limits set by God they put themselves into danger; moreover, instead of thanking servants of God who inform them of this danger, they regard these very servants to be a cause of this danger.

وَجَاء مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢٠) اتَّبِعُوا مَن لاَّ يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٢١)[18]

These verses explain the nature of help provided by the third warner mentioned earlier in verse fourteen. I have already explained earlier with reference to Sūrah A'rāf verse 9 that the word رَجُلٌ mentioned in the verse under discussion is the true believer who belonged to the Pharaoh's family and who has been referred to in detail in Sūrah Mu'min. Earlier, I have also referred to his speech. The obvious indication to this is that the words in which he is introduced here are the same in which he is introduced in Sūrah A'rāf.

It is evident from the words وَجَاء مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى that the sympathy of the true believer was not mere pretension. It was genuine. Many people shower praises on a noble person and a noble objective in their drawing room talk; however, there are very few especially among the rich and the elite who show practical enthusiasm in this regard. However, the case of this true believer was very different. His house was situated at a far off end of the city, as is evident from the word أَقْصَى. However, as soon as he felt danger was lurking for Moses (sws) he ran to him, as is evident from the word يَسْعَى. He reached there and by risking his own interests and even his life became a shield for him. It is such an instance which the Qur'ān has cited here. It is contextually evident that this instance was the one in which he delivered the speech before the Pharaoh referred to earlier. The succeeding verses corroborate my view.

The words قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ refer rather concisely to this speech he gave before the Pharaoh and his courtiers. The word الْمُرْسَلِينَ refers to the category of messengers. They do not necessitate that he considered

18. And a man came running from the far end of the city. He said: "My people! Follow the messengers. Follow those who ask no reward of you and are also rightly guided.

himself as well among them in the formal sense. The real stress here is that the nation instead of following the Pharaoh, Hāmān and Qārūn and other evil leaders should follow those whom God has sent to guide people or those who support them and are following them.

The verse اتَّبِعُوا مَـن لاَّ يَـسْأَلُـكُمْ أَجْـرًا وَهُـم مُّهْتَـدُونَ contains two reasons in favour of following the messengers. Firstly, they have no vested interest associated with their preaching; they are enduring all these sorrows purely to guide people; on the other hand, leaders who are opposing their preaching are merely deceiving people for their selfish motives. Secondly, these messengers are rightly guided (وَهُـم مُّهْتَـدُونَ), besides being so pure in their motives. It is evident from this that being selfless does vouch for a person's sincere intentions; however, to be sincere in intention does not mean that a person is also rightly guided. Hence, besides a person's pure intention and selfless nature, it is also essential to see whether what he says is rational as well or not. If his message has both these features, then not following him is a great misfortune.

وَمَا لِي لاَ أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٢) أَأَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِن يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَن بِضُرٍّ لاَّ تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يُنقِذُونِ (٢٣) إِنِّي إِذًا لَّفِي ضَلاَلٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٤) إِنِّي آمَنتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ (٢٥)[19]

The style of the above verses shows that the true believer uttered these words in response to the rebukes of the leaders. When he would have openly asked them to follow the messengers, the selfish leaders must have regarded him to be an enemy of their nation and of their ancestral religion. In reply to this, he must have said these words that why should he not worship the being who brought him into existence and towards whom all have to return. The direct address found in وَإِلَيْـهِ تُرْجَعُـونَ (and towards Him shall you be returned) is to express anger. The implication is that one day everyone will be brought before the Lord worshipping whom they are so emphatically stopping him from; at that time, each person will be held accountable for this deeds.

The verse أَأَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِن يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَن بِضُرٍّ لاَّ تُغْـنِ عَـنِّي شَـفَاعَتُهُمْ شَـيْئًا وَلاَ يُنقِذُونِ implies that how is it possible that he regard certain deities worthy

19. And why should I not worship Him Who has created me and to Whom you shall all be returned? Should I worship other gods than Him? If the Merciful wants to afflict me with harm, neither their intercession will be of benefit to me, nor will they be able to save me. Indeed, I should then be in evident error. I believe in your Lord; so hear me."

of worship when these deities are so helpless that neither can their intercession save him from God if He wants to harm him nor do they have the status and position to deliver him from any calamity.

The words إِنِّي إِذًا لَّفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ imply that if he does this, then this will be regarded as an open deviation from the truth for which he has no excuse.

The verse is a decisive answer to shut up his people. They should listen up to the words of the messenger that he has professed faith in God. In other words, instead of wasting time to make him stray from the right path it is better that they too adopt the path which he has adopted and profess faith in the Lord he has professed faith in. This is because He is in fact their Lord as well; if they try to lead him away from God it will be like leading him away from their Lord.

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦) بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (٢٧)[20]

After the above mentioned proclamation by the true believer from the royal family, it is obvious that the whole nation would have become his enemy and started to conspire against him. However, God saved him from their conspiracies and he was given glad tidings of Paradise as a result of his vehement campaign to support the truth. At this, he expressed his longing that would that his people knew the exalted nature of that in reward of which he was forgiven and bestowed with success.

Here it is not known when these glad tidings were given to him.

If one reflects on the context, three options are possible:

Firstly, after this declaration made by him his people would have martyred him and at that instance he was given these glad tidings.

Secondly, after losing hope in the attitude shown by his people, he migrated from them and at that instance he was given these glad tidings.

Thirdly, since his mission had been completed God gave him death and at that instance he was given these glad tidings.

The first of these options though seems very probable if the context is taken into consideration. However, it is evident from the closing remarks of his speech cited above (with reference to Sūrah Mu'min) that God protected him from the conspiracies of his nation. After these closing remarks, his protection is mentioned thus:

فَسَتَذْكُرُونَ مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ وَأُفَوِّضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللهِ إِنَّ اللهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ إِنَّ اللهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ فَوَقَاهُ اللهُ سَيِّئَاتِ مَا مَكَرُوا وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ (٤٠: ٤٤–٤٥)

20. It was said: "Enter Paradise." He exclaimed: "Would that my people knew that my Lord forgiven me and has made me among the honourable."

[O My People!] Soon you will recall the things I am telling you. I consign my matter to God. Indeed, He is watching the affairs of His servants. Thus God delivered him from the evil consequences of their ploys and My punishment surrounded the Pharaoh's people. (40:44-45)

In the light of these verses, the option that he was killed is ruled out. However, both the first and the second option remain and it is difficult to decide between them. Only God knows it. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that God gave him glad tidings of Paradise for endangering his life to support the truth.

وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِن بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُندٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَمَا كُنَّا مُنزِلِينَ (٢٨) إِن كَانَتْ إِلاَّ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ (٢٩)[21]

The words مِـن بَعْـدِهِ can be spoken for both the options referred to above: ie. after his death or after his migration.

This is a reference to the established practice of God which the rejecters of a messenger necessarily face when the messenger and his companions migrate from their nation. The verse states that after that to decimate his nation, God did not need to send down any army from the heavens; it was just one blast from God that devastated them. The word صَـيْحَة signifies punishment. The words وَمَـا كُنَّـا مُنزِلِـينَ express the fact that no army from the heavens was needed to destroy them because for such a task no such arrangement is need by God; just one blast is enough from Him.

It should also be kept in mind that though this punishment visited the Pharaoh and his people for denying Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) it has been mentioned here as if it came because of denying the true believer. This expresses the exaltedness of the companions of a messenger in the eyes of God because denying them becomes tantamount to denying the messenger and the fate of this denial is the same as that of the denial of the messenger.

A possible question that can arise here is that the punishment which visited the rejecters of Moses (sws) ie. Pharaoh and his people was that he and his armies were drowned; however, the punishment mentioned in this verse does not refer to this incident of drowning; in fact, the words show that the nature of punishment was of the same sort as the one which visited the 'Ād, the Thamūd and other ancient nations and which

21. And after him, We did not send down any army from the heavens on his people nor were We the senders. It was just a shout so that they were routed instantaneously.

has been referred to by the true believer in his speech cited earlier with reference to Sūrah Mu'min.

The answer to this question is that two types of punishments struck the Pharaoh and his people. On the one hand, the Almighty had him and his armies drowned in the sea through cyclones. On the other hand, thunder, lightning and earthquakes destroyed all the buildings and orchards of Egypt. This second punishment is not mentioned in the Torah. However, it is explicitly mentioned by the Qur'ān. Thus, for example, it says:

وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُواْ يَعْرِشُونَ (٧: ١٣٧)

And we destroyed everything which the Pharaoh and his people had made and their vine-creepers. (7:137)

This is in accordance with the established practice of God as well. The punishment which inflicts a people who have denied their messenger totally routs them. This could not have been fulfilled merely by the Pharaoh and his armies being drowned. This could only have been fulfilled by the type of punishment referred to in the above cited verse of Sūrah A'rāf.

يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلاَّ كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُون (٣٠)[22]

This is an expression of sorrow on the misfortune of the rejecters of the messengers of God: every time God sent a messenger for the guidance of people they made fun of him and then faced the evil consequences of this attitude. Thus, today the Quraysh are adopting the same attitude with their messenger and his companions as the one adopted by the Pharaoh and his people with their messenger and they shall necessarily be subjected to the same fate as their predecessors. A messenger comes as the greatest manifestation of God's mercy. However, if he is made fun of, he becomes the greatest scourge for his people.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّنْ الْقُرُونِ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لاَ يَرْجِعُونَ (٣١) وَإِن كُلٌّ لَّمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ (٣٢)[23]

This verse directs the attention of the Quraysh to the past in order to

22. Alas for My slaves! They only made fun of every messenger that came to them.

23. Have they not reflected that there have been many nations before them whom We destroyed. Never shall they now return to them. Indeed, all of them shall be brought before Us.

show them what happens to those who make fun of the messengers of God. The web of deception they are weaving is very dangerous. Nations who indulge in this are routed to such an extent in this world that they can never return. All of them are going to appear before God one day Who will hold them accountable for their deeds.

The word لَمَّـا in وَ إِنْ كُلٌّ لَمَّـا is used in the same way as in the verse: إِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (٨٦: ٤) (indeed, every every soul has a guardian over it, (86:4)). The إِنْ is reduced (*mukhaffafah*) as is evidenced by the letter ل. Since a rhythmic vacuum is created by pronouncing it alone, it is transformed into لَمَّا to fill this vacuum. No difference in meaning results.

Section III: Verses (33-50)

In the succeeding verses, the warning sounded by a messenger and the message towards he invites his addressees is corroborated by signs found in the world around man. People who shut their eyes to all these signs and demand a new one are reprimanded. In other words, after the historical evidence mentioned earlier from here on the discourse connects to the introduction of the *sūrah* in which it was said that their real malady which is arrogance is not letting them look towards the signs found above and below them otherwise there are numerous signs around them. After this attitude of theirs and its fate was delineated through the example of the Pharaoh's people now again their attention is directed at the signs found in the heavens and the earth.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ (٣٣) وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا جَنَّاتٍ مِن نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ وَفَجَّرْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ الْعُيُونِ (٣٤) لِيَأْكُلُوا مِن ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٣٥) سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٦) وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمْ اللَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُم مُّظْلِمُونَ (٣٧) وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٣٨) وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّى عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ (٣٩) لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنبَغِي لَهَا أَن تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (٤٠) وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمْ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (٤١) وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّن مِّثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ (٤٢) وَإِن نَّشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنقَذُونَ (٤٣) إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينٍ (٤٤) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ

لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٤٥) وَمَا تَأْتِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ (٤٦) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنُطْعِمُ مَن لَّوْ يَشَاء اللهُ أَطْعَمَهُ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٧) وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٨) مَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ (٤٩) فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَلَا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٥٠)

And a great sign for them is the dead earth. We gave it life, and from it produced grain; then they eat from it. And We planted it with orchards of the palm and the vine tree, and produced gushing springs in it so that they may eat its fruit. And this is not the work of their hands. So do they not show gratitude? (33-35)

Glory be to Him who created all types of those things also which the earth produces and also from among themselves and also things which they know not. (36)

And a great sign for them is the night. We pull the day from it and all of a sudden they are left in darkness and the sun moves according to its prescribed course. This is the planning of God, the Mighty One, the All-knowing. And for the moon we have ordained phases till it becomes like an old twig of a palm-tree. Neither can the sun dare overtake the moon nor can the night overtake the day. Each moves in its specific orbit. (37-40)

And a great sign for them is that We loaded their generation on a laden ark, and for them created similar things [in the land] on which they embark. And if We want, We can have them drowned; then neither will there be anyone to help them nor will they be rescued. Thus, it is only Our mercy and to let them live for a specified time. (41-44)

And when they are told: "Have fear of that which is before you and behind you so that you may be shown mercy," [they show indifference to this.] And which ever sign from the signs of their Lord comes to them they show indifference to it. And when they are told: "Spend of the sustenance God has blessed you with," the disbelievers say to the believers: "Are we to feed those whom God could have fed had He chosen to? Surely, you are in glaring error." (45-47)

And they ask: "When will this threat materialize if you are a truthful people." These people are only waiting but for a single shout which will grab them and they be left quarrelling. Hence, they will neither be able to make a will nor will they be able to return to their folks. (48-50)

Explanation

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ (٣٣) وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا

جَنَّاتٍ مِن نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ وَفَجَّرْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ الْعُيُونِ (٣٤) لِيَأْكُلُوا مِن ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٣٥)[24]

In these verses, attention is foremost directed to the signs found in the earth. Details can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* how various testimonies are drawn from enlivening a dead piece of land on the Hereafter, monotheism and revelation of divine guidance. Here, the aspect of providence is specially highlighted and after that the right to show gratitude to God is asked for which is necessarily imposed on people. The necessary consequence of this right is that people worship God alone. This is because the favours they have been blessed with are neither the result of their own endeavours nor any other being is responsible to give them these favours.

The words وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ in آيَةٌ is not defined to show its great magnitude. The implication is that if these people need a sign, they need not go far. The greatest sign for them is the earth beneath their feet. At times, a land is dead and desolate; God enlivens it by sending rain to it and then causes grain to grow from it. On these grains depends the livelihood of people. If people reflect, they will see that it is not merely grains which have been arranged for their livelihood, He has also caused date-palms and vine-trees and other fruit orchards to grow and has made springs to keep them green.

The words لِيَأْكُلُوا مِن ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ state the obligation imposed on man because of all this elaborate arrangement: it has been done so that people benefit from God's favours and pay heed that all this is not the result of their own effort; it is a bestowal from a merciful and noble Lord. He gave them these favours without even being entitled to them so that they show gratitude and obedience to Him. However, they are proving such ingrates that on the one hand they are benefitting from all these favours and on the other hand when they are called upon to express gratitude before God they show arrogance and demand signs.

There is a difference of opinion in the antecedent of the pronoun in ثَمَرِهِ. Most people regard it to be God, ie. people should eat the fruits bestowed to them by God and be grateful to Him). I find this interpretation to be artificial. The style of the discourse since the preceding verses is in the first person. Hence, giving due consideration to

24. A great sign for them is the dead earth. We gave it life, and from it produced grain; thus they eat from it. And We planted it with orchards of the palm and the vine tree, and produced gushing springs in it so that they may eat its fruit. And this is not a produce of their hands. So do they not show gratitude?

this fact, if God was to be the antecedent of the pronoun then the words should have been مِن أَثْمَارِنَا or words to similar effect instead of مِـن ثَمَـرِهِ – even though this too would not have been entirely appropriate. In my opinion, the antecedent of the pronoun is أرض (earth) that is already in mention since the preceding verses. However, [in spite of the fact that أرض is a feminine noun in Arabic] here a masculine pronoun is used to refer to it on the principle of dominant element (*'alā sabīl al-taghlīb*). According to a principle of the Arabic language, at times a pronoun occurs not with relation to the word but to the meaning it conveys. Several examples of this can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. By using the masculine pronoun for أرض the purpose is to refer to الْبَـلَدُ الطَّيِّـبُ. This is because though rain not only irrigates dry and barren areas and those which are lush and fertile, only the latter bear vegetation. This topic is discussed in Sūrah A'rāf in the following words: وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّـهِ وَالَّذِي خَبُـثَ لاَ يَخْـرُجُ إِلاَّ نَكِـدًا (٧: ٥٨) (And the land which is fertile its vegetation really blooms with the directive of its Lord; and that which is defective always produce defective things.(7:58))

The words وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ form a parenthetical sentence, and convey a very important reminder. The implication is that they should consume the fruits but always remember that they were not the ones who brought these fruits into existence; it was God Who did so. It is a reminder of this reality that induces a person to show gratitude to God and it is this gratitude which is the foundation of all religion. Those who are unaware of this reality think that they are entitled to God's favours and that they are a result of their own abilities. The result is that instead of thanking God they are afflicted with arrogance and arrogance by its nature is a cause of polytheism and all forms of spreading anarchy and disorder in the society.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٦)[25]

The word أَزْوَاج means "types", "kinds" and also means "pairs". Here it encompasses both meanings. There is variety and diversity in whatever is created from the earth and everything that is created from it also occurs in pairs. Similarly, one can see a lot of difference in the appearances, colours, statures and languages of human beings; at the same time, human beings too occur in pairs. Same is the case with that part of the universe which is beyond the access of our knowledge. If one

25. Glory be to Him who created all types of those also which the earth produces and from among themselves and also things which they know not.

takes a step ahead and reflects, one will come to see that there is a harmony of objective in its variety and accord in its discord. This shows that only one God reigns over all the universe; no one else can interfere in it. Exalted is God from any trace of polytheism, and every object of this universe bears witness to this.

Moreover, another thing that becomes evident is that when every thing occurs in pairs to achieve its purpose, it is necessary that this world should also have its counterpart; otherwise, this world will be a purposeless place. And it is not possible that a wise being do something purposeless and meaningless. Thus to fill the vacuum created by this world, He has created the next world.

The purport of the verse is that this universe through its very existence bears witness to monotheism and the Hereafter and that exalted is the Creator of this universe from doing something purposeless. The word سُبْحَانَ occurs to absolve someone of all negative attributes. Here its occasion and context are very evident.

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمُ اللَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُم مُّظْلِمُونَ (٣٧)[26]

The verse says that if these people reflect they will find that the night is a great sign of God's power, mercy, providence and monotheism. He enwraps it with a cloth of light and the dazzling day appears for them. They can now do their daily chores in it. Then God pulls away this cloth of light and people are left in darkness so that they can take rest in it. If God does not enwrap the night with the cloth of light, they will always remain in darkness and if He does not pull away this cloth of light, they will never be able to receive rest and comfort at night. This coming and going of the day and night and their harmony for the benefit of the creation is a clear testimony to the fact that this world is not a battleground of conflicting elements; it is in fact made by a Creator Who is using all these conflicting elements for its collective benefit.

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٣٨)[27]

Attention is now directed to the greatest sign of the day: the sun. They should observe the sun and see that it very punctually moves along its prescribed path; it dare not deviate from this path or there lapses even a second in its punctuality. Does this bear witness to the fact that whatever

26. A great sign for them is the night. We it We pull the day and all of a sudden they are left in darkness

27. And the sun revolves according to its prescribed course. This is the planning of God, the Mighty One, the All-knowing.

is going on in this world is going on of its own accord; there is no wise and well-planned effort behind it? Or is this not evidence enough to the fact that behind this is a powerful, all-knowledgeable and wise being in whose hands is the reins of everything and who is putting to use everything in accordance with his plan and strategy? The right answer to this question in harmony with sense and reason is: ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (This is the planning of God, the Mighty One, the All-knowing). In other words, neither has this world come into existence accidentally nor is it being run of its own accord. It is, in fact, the product of the planning of a being who is all-powerful, all-dominant and all-knowledgeable.

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّى عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ (٣٩)[28]

This verse says that similar is the situation with the second big sign of this universe: the moon. It neither controls nor governs itself. God has ordained various phases through which it passes every month. After passing through these phases it ultimately becomes like an old twig of a palm-tree.

The word عُرْجُون refers to that branch of a palm-tree in which there are bunches of dates. These branches after drying up assume the same shape as the one a moon has in its initial and final phases. This comparison is pointing to the fact that the state of the moon whom these foolish people worship is that it has to pass through various phases each month in which it becomes like a dry thorn and becomes like a crooked dry twig of a palm-tree.

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنبَغِي لَهَا أَن تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (٤٠)[29]

This verse implies that the whole system of this universe is in the hands of the Creator of this universe in such a manner that neither the sun can dare deviate from its prescribed path and enter the path of the moon and catch upon it nor can the night dare come late after the day even by a second. Each of these objects has to move in its prescribed path. This is a very clear evidence of the fact that the reins of everything are in the hands of the all-powerful and almighty God and He alone is the master of everything and He alone has authority of everything. Had there been someone else with Him involved in administering this

28. And for the moon we have ordained phases till it becomes like an old twig of a palm-tree.

29. Neither can the sun dare overtake the moon nor can the night overtake the day. Each moves in its specific orbit.

universe, it would have been destroyed because of a clash between its conflicting elements. What is very evident in particular is that the more prominent an object is and as a result of this very prominence people regard it to be a deity and worship it, the more it declares from its very existence that it is subject to authority the most; it cannot dare deviate from its prescribed path in the slightest way.

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمْ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (٤١) وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّن مِّثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ (٤٢) وَإِن نَّشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنقَذُونَ (٤٣) إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينٍ (٤٤)[30]

The pronoun هُمْ (they) in ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ refers to the addressees in their capacity of human beings and the word ذُرِّيَّةٌ refers to "a generation." The word مَشْحُون is used for a laden ship. The verses state that if they need a further sign they should observe that God for the sea travel of generations of mankind has made sea water capable of lifting ships laden with thousands of tons of goods and they do not drown in it.

The verse وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّن مِّثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ implies that just as God has made ships for sea-travel He had made similar means of transport for land-travel. These include horses and camels. In particular, the camel was regarded by the Arabs as the ship of the desert. Included in the application of this verse are other means of transport as well which technology has invented today like cars, lorries, buses and airplanes etc. The laws of science which govern the working of these things have been made and taught by God. It is by taking advantage of these laws that man makes various inventions and benefits from them. Hence, it is because of this real cause of causes that God has ascribed the making of these things to Himself.

Consider next the verse: وَإِن نَّشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنقَذُونَ. The word صَرِيخ means "to plead" and "to answer pleadings" as well as "one who pleads" and "one who answers pleadings." Here all these meanings are appropriate. The verse implies that it is God's mercy that their ships laden with goods and merchandise run about on sea waters; If He wants, He can have these ships drown together with them. At that time, neither will they be able to plead nor will there be someone to respond to their pleadings nor will they be able to come out of this state of ruin and

30. And a great sign for them is that We loaded their generation on the laden ark, and for them created similar things [in the land] on which they embark. And if We want, We can have them drowned; then neither will there be anyone to help them nor will they be rescued. Thus, it is only Our mercy and to let them live for a while.

destruction.

The words إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَـاعًا إِلَى حِـينٍ imply that whatever favours man has is neither a legacy of his forefathers nor the result of his power and ability; it is merely the result of God's graciousness. He has been given these blessings and favours till an appointed time. A time is finally to come when God will hold him accountable for these favours and see if they have shown gratitude to them and fulfilled their obligation towards these favours.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٤٥)[31]

The verse implies that when these people are warned to have fear of the heavens and the earth in front of them and behind them so that they are thrusted with the earth and pieces are thrown down on them from the heavens, then instead of paying heed they show evasion and demand a sign for punishment. The answer to the conditional particle إِذَا is suppressed here because of obvious contextual indications and the words مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُـمْ are also suppressed after مِنَ السَّمِاءِ وَ الأَرْض. In Sūrah Sabā', the words are: أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُـم مِّـنَ الـسَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضِ إِن نَّشَأْ نَخْسِفْ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطْ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسَفًا مِّـنَ الـسَّمَاء (٣٥: ٩) (Do they no reflect on the heavens and the earth in front of them and behind them? If We want We can sink them with the earth or shower on them pieces from the heavens, (35:9)).

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ (٤٦)[32]

The verse implies that this evasion and rejection has got the better of them so much that whatever sign comes to them from God to teach and remind them is no avail to them. Nothing is able to influence them.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنُطْعِمُ مَن لَّوْ يَشَاء اللهُ أَطْعَمَهُ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٧)[33]

This verse states an example of their callous and indifferent behaviour

31. And when they are told: "Have fear of that which is before you and behind you so that you may be shown mercy."

32. [They show indifference to this.] And which ever sign from the signs of their Lord comes to them they show indifference to it.

33. And when they are told: "Spend of the sustenance God has blessed you with," the disbelievers say to the believers: "Are we to feed those whom God could have fed had He chosen to? Surely, you are in glaring error."

referred to earlier: when they are invited to express gratitude to God as is cited in verse thirty five earlier, they make fun of it. Thus when they are asked to spend in charity and help the needy from the riches and blessings bestowed to them by God because this is an obligation they owe to these favours, they reply that why should they spend on those whom God has deprived; those who ask them to do this have strayed in error; had God wanted to feed and help them, He was not short of any means to do so; but since He chose not to do this, it clearly means that He wanted to make them poor; so if God willed all of this for them, and they spend on these people then this will not please God and they will earn His anger. After citing this absurd reasoning on their part, no comment is made by the Qur'ān. It has completely ignored it because its foolishness and callousness so evident that no comment is required. The purpose is to show that when hearts and intellects get perverted, then this is what people become like.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٨) مَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ (٤٩) فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَلَا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٥٠)[34]

These verses imply that when these people do not pay heed to the verses of God and only continue to perpetually demand to see the punishment with which they are being threatened. Without this they are not willing to regard those who give this news to be truthful.

Consider next the verse: مَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ. The word صَيْحَة has already occurred in verse twenty nine earlier. It is stated that on what support are they arrogantly demanding the punishment. God does not need to make any arrangements for it; only a single blast from Him will be sufficient; whilst they are entangled in these discussions, it will catch them unaware. The implication is that if the punishment is not coming, it does not mean that no preparation has been made; actually no preparation is needed at all. It is only because God out of His mercy is giving them further respite.

The words فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَلَا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ imply that that a single blast from God will be such that everyone will be seized by it wherever they are; he will not even get the chance to make a will or return to his family.

34. And they ask: "When will this threat materialize if you are a truthful people." These people are only waiting but for a single shout, which will grab and they be left quarrelling. Hence, they will neither be able to make a will nor will they return to their folks.

Section IV: Verses (51-68)

In the succeeding verses it is said that just as a single blast from God is needed to bring the punishment in this world, similarly when God wants to bring about the Day of Judgement no preparation will be needed. At the sound of the trumpet everyone will be raised to life.

After this occurs a portrayal of the Day of Judgement: the believers will be engrossed in their interests on that day, and the disbelievers will face the consequence of their deeds. On that day, no one will be allowed to speak; in fact, his own limbs will testify against each person.

After this a threat is sounded: if these people are stubbornly demanding punishment, they should remember that this is not at all difficult for God. If God wants He can distort and mutilate them so that they are deprived of all their abilities in the blink of an eye. They can see the signs of this in this world if they have eyes; if God has not effaced them, it is not because this task is difficult for them; it is only because of His mercy that He is giving respite to people in spite of their rebelliousness. Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُم مِّنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَنسِلُونَ (٥١) قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَن بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٥٢) إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ (٥٣) فَالْيَوْمَ لَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَلَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٥٤) إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغُلٍ فَاكِهُونَ (٥٥) هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَّكِؤُونَ (٥٦) لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَلَهُم مَّا يَدَّعُونَ (٥٧) سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِن رَّبٍّ رَّحِيمٍ (٥٨) وَامْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٥٩) أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٦٠) وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٦١) وَلَقَدْ أَضَلَّ مِنكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيرًا أَفَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٢) هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٦٣) اصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٦٤) الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٦٥) وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَى أَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا الصِّرَاطَ فَأَنَّى يُبْصِرُونَ (٦٦) وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَمَسَخْنَاهُمْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِهِمْ فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مُضِيًّا وَلَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٦٧) وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٨)

And the trumpet shall be sounded; so they will suddenly come out of their graves and hasten towards their Lord. They will say: "Our

misfortune! Who has raised us from our grave? This is the same thing which the Merciful God has promised us and the word of the messengers has come true. It will only be a shout; so all of a sudden they will be brought to Our presence. (51-53)

So, today no soul shall suffer any injustice. And you shall be rewarded according only to what you had been doing. Indeed, the dwellers of Paradise will be involved in their things of interest. Together with their wives, they shall recline upon soft couches in shade. And they shall have fruits therein, and all that they desire. They shall be conveyed salutations from the Merciful Lord. (54-58)

And O wrongdoers!: "Away with you this day! And sons of Adam! Did I not direct you never to worship Satan; indeed he is your acknowledged foe. And to worship Me alone? This only is the straight path. And he has led a vast majority among you astray. So do you not understand? This is the Hell you had been threatened with. Enter in it now because of your disbelief." (59-64)

Today We shall seal their mouths and their hands will inform Us, and their very feet will testify to what they had been doing. (65)

And had it been Our will, We could have effaced their eyes; then if they went towards the path how would have they seen it? And had it been Our will, We could have defaced them where they stood so that they could neither go forward nor retrace their steps. And We reverse the growth of those to whom We give long life. So do they not understand? (68)

Explanation

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُم مِّنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَنسِلُونَ (٥١)[35]

It has been mentioned in verses 48-49 earlier that if the punishment with which the Quraysh are being threatened is being deferred, then this is not because God has to make preparations for it which are not complete as yet; if God wants to send punishment He only needs a shout. Now, in this verse it is said that the matter of the Hereafter is no different. God does not require any preparation to bring it about; as soon as the trumpet is sounded, people will run towards their Lord. In other words, the implied meaning is that people who are trying to corner the Prophet (sws) by demanding the punishment or the Hereafter should remember that none of these tasks is difficult for God. They can happen in the blink of an eye. If in spite of this they are not being accomplished, then it only means that God wants people to benefit from this respite and

35. And the trumpet shall be sounded; so they will suddenly come out of their graves and hasten towards their Lord.

seek repentance and mend their ways.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَن بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٥٢)[36]

The verse implies that these people who make fun will be dumb-struck with awe and fear and exclaim who has raised them from their graves. This question will not be meant to elicit an answer; they will pose it to express their misfortune. What they contended to be a bluff has come true!

There can be two possibilities regarding the speaker of the words: هَـذَا مَـا وَعَـدَ الـرَّحْمَنُ وَصَـدَقَ الْمُرْسَـلُونَ. One, that they are uttered by these very people: they would exclaim that what has happened was already in their information and that what the messengers of God had said has come true. Second, it is spoken by the angels on behalf of God in order to humiliate these people; they should now blame themselves for their misfortune; what has come before them is nothing but what had been informed to them by the Most Merciful through their messengers; but they never paid heed to it. I would prefer the second of these options because it is supported by parallel verses of the Qur'ān. It is said in Sūrah Ṣaffāt:

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنظُرُونَ وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَـوْمُ الدِّيـنِ هَـذَا يَـوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٣٧: ١٩– ٢١)

Thus it shall be just one scream and they will look about. And they will say: "Woe betide us! This is the Day of Reckoning." This is the Judgement Day which you had been denying.

The last of the above sentences can only be communicated to them from God at the right time to humiliate them.

إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ (٥٣)[37]

All this will happen in the blink of any eye merely by a shout from God. For this He will not need neither any trench nor any canon. Just as God can create anything merely by uttering the word *kun*, He can bring about the Day of Judgement with just one shout. The word جَمِيـعٌ is for

36. They will say: "Our misfortune! Who has raised us from our grave? This is the same thing which the Merciful God has promised us and the word of the messengers has come true."

37. It will only be a shout; so all of a sudden they will be brought to Our presence.

emphasis. The implication is that they should not remain in any misconception that anyone will be able to escape God's grasp. After this, all their nobles and commoners, rulers and ruled, worshippers and deities will be seized and brought before God. The word مُحْضَرُونَ portrays their humiliating situation: they shall be brought before the presence of God the way criminals are brought in a court.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَلَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٥٤)[38]

The style adopted in this verse is as if what is said in it is happening. The Day of Judgement has arrived and the addressees are being told about its arrival. Several examples of this style can be seen in the Qur'ān.

The verse says that today is the day when perfect justice will manifest itself; no one will be wronged in the slightest way. The words وَلَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ depict perfect justice: people will be dealt such that they shall reap what they sowed. Obviously, when one is going to see what he himself earned, then no possibility of injustice or oppression remains in this.

إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغُلٍ فَاكِهُونَ (٥٥) هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَّكِؤُونَ (٥٦) لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَلَهُم مَّا يَدَّعُونَ (٥٧) سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِن رَّبٍّ رَّحِيمٍ (٥٨)[39]

This is a portrayal of what will happen to the dwellers of Paradise. It is said that they will be engrossed in leisurely pursuits. The word شُغُل occurs as an undefined noun to magnify its import.

The words هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَّكِؤُونَ mention their wives signifying the fact that their wives too will be with them in their leisurely pursuits. They are specially mentioned because no leisurely pursuit is complete without one's family. The words عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَّكِؤُونَ depict the best of sitting places. In those times, kings and queens would sit on embellished thrones. The dwellers of Paradise in their eternal kingdom will also sit in this manner.

The words لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَلَهُم مَّا يَدَّعُونَ state that in Paradise they will be presented with fruits and moreover whatever else they ask for. The expression مَّا يَدَّعُونَ (whatever they demand) means مَّا يَشْتَهُوْن (whatever

38. So, today no soul shall suffer any injustice. And you shall be rewarded according only to what you had been doing.

39. Indeed, the dwellers of Paradise will be involved in their things of interest. Together with their wives, they shall recline upon soft couches in shade. And they shall have fruits therein, and all that they desire. They shall be conveyed salutations from the Merciful Lord.

they desire). It needs to be kept in consideration that the greatest of kings in this world never had this status and position that whatever he wants he is able to get it immediately. However, the dwellers of Paradise will have this prerogative and will continue to enjoy it.

The words سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِـن رَّبٍّ رَّحِـيمٍ mention the greatest success achieved by the dwellers of Paradise. They shall be conveyed salutations from God. In my opinion, the construction of the sentence is thus: تَحِيَّـتُهُمْ سَـلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِن رَّبٍّ رَّحِـيمٍ. The inchoative (*mubtadā'*) is suppressed here so that all the attention of the addressee is focused on the enunciative (*khabar*). In Sūrah Aḥzāb, the words are: تَحِيَّـتُهُمْ يَـوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَـهُ سَـلَامٌ. (And they shall be welcomed by *salām* on the day they will meet Him, (33:44)). It is evident from various narratives that angels will enter from all the doors of Paradise or communicate the *salām* of God to them. Who can even imagine this success reaped by the dwellers of Paradise on receiving salutations from their noble and merciful Lord:

بریں مژده گرجاں فشانم رواست

(Even sacrificing one's life on these glad tidings is acceptable.)

وَامْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٥٩) أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٦٠) وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٦١) وَلَقَدْ أَضَلَّ مِنكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيرًا أَفَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٢)[40]

After referring to the state of the dwellers of Paradise, these verses now mention the fate met by the wrongdoers. They shall be told on behalf of God that in the previous world they were blended and mixed up with His believers because that world was a place of trial and test; however, now is the time of reward and punishment; hence they must now separate from the believers and suffer the consequences of their deeds; now their world is separate from that of the believers.

When the word عَهـدَ is used with the preposition إِلَيْ, it encompasses the meaning of being made responsible of something and standing as guarantor to something. Thus for example, in Sūrah Baqarah the words are: وَعَهِـدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ (٢: ١٢٥) (And We obligated Abraham and Ishmael to cleanse Our House for those who will come to

40. And O wrongdoers!: "Away with you this day! Sons of Adam! Did I not direct you never to worship Satan; indeed he is your acknowledged foe. And to worship Me alone? This only is the straight path. And he has led a vast majority among you astray. So do you not understand?

walk round it, (2:125)). The next verses remind the wrongdoers in a rebuking way; they will be asked that as sons of Adam were they not bound by the promise of never to worship Satan; he is their inveterate foe; they could have reached the Almighty by just adhering to this straight path; however, they ended up so unfortunate that Satan was able to lead astray a great many among them; did they not have even this acumen as to know friend from foe; did they not remember that it was Satan who deceived their forefathers and had them expelled from Paradise and that his enmity with the progeny of Adam is till the Day of Judgement.

Satan's enmity, his challenge, God's reminder to Adam's progeny and other related aspects referred to here are mentioned in detail in previous *sūrahs* – in particular, Sūrah Baqarah and Sūrah A'rāf. Readers may understand this concise mention here in the light of the comprehensive mention in these referred to *sūrahs*.

هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٦٣) اصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٦٤)[41]

The verse states that if these people did not remember the covenant of God and His warning, then its fate is before them in the form of Hell. God's messengers and His pious people warned them of this fate but they continued to deny it; now they should enter it; it is now their abode.

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٦٥)[42]

In the previous verse, the address was direct and in this verse it has become indirect. The reason is that the previous verse expresses wrath and rebuke for which a direct address is very appropriate. On the contrary, this verse portrays their helplessness for which the indirect style of address is more apt. The verse states that on the Day of Judgement the Almighty will seal their mouths and give speech to their hands and feat which will narrate to God the details of their misdeeds. The reason that mouths will be sealed is that the tongue can lie and also present lame excuses; however, the hands and feet will narrate only that which they did. In this manner, the limbs of a person will deliver conclusive verdict against him and no verdict can be greater than this one. This topic is also discussed in Sūrah Raḥmān in the following

41. This is the Hell you had been threatened with. Enter in it now because of your disbelief."

42. Today We shall seal their mouths and their hands will inform Us, and their very feet will testify to what they had been doing.

words: فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُسْأَلُ عَن ذَنبِهِ إِنسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ… يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ (٥٥: ٣٩-٤١) (Thus on that day, there will be no need to ask neither man nor jinn of his sins …The wrongdoers will be recognized by their signs; thus they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown in Hell]). (55:39-41)

وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَى أَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا الصِّرَاطَ فَأَنَّى يُبْصِرُونَ (٦٦)[43]

The verse implies that when these people are not using their faculties and abilities bestowed to them by God they deserve to be deprived from them and this task is not the slightest difficult for God. If He wanted, He could have obliterated their eyes and then they would have been left to wonder about and would never have found the way. However, if God did not do this then it is only His mercy and they still have a chance to benefit from this gracious respite from Him and not shut their eyes. The particle لَوْ signifies a conditional sentence in the past and in my opinion there is an incomplete verb suppressed before the indefinite verb. The actual construction would be: وَلَوْ كُنَّا نَشَاء.

وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَمَسَخْنَاهُمْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِهِمْ فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مُضِيًّا وَلَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٦٧)[44]

In a similar way, had God wanted He would have disfigured them in their very places and then they would not have been able to move forward or backward. However, out of His grace God did not do this and had given respite to them so that if they want they can mend their ways: they should recognize their obligation to God's favours, duly honour them and be grateful to God.

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٨)[45]

This verse furnishes an argument from human observation on the threat sounded in the previous verses: It is not difficult at all to disfigure and distort the abilities of people. When a person comes into being he is a lump of meat. Then God gave him strength so that when he reaches adolescence all his natural abilities are at their pinnacle. After that, old age afflicts a person and he gradually returns to a state of weakness and

43. Had it been Our will, We could have effaced their eyes; then if they went towards the path how would have they seen it?

44. And had it been Our will, We could have defaced them where they stood so that they could neither go forward nor retrace their steps.

45. And We reverse the growth of those to whom We give long life. So do they not understand?

helplessness the way he was when he was born. The Qur'ān has portrayed this state of his in the following words: اللّٰهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِن بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِن بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً (٣٠: ٥٤) (It is God Who created you from weakness; then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave weakness and old age (30:54)). This is a general portrayal. Everyone who passes through childhood and old age experiences this situation. The weakness in one's strength and potential is experienced the most by those who reach old age. The Qur'ān has depicted this state in the following words: وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لاَ يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا (٢٧: ٧٠) (And of you there are some who are sent back to senility, so that they know nothing even after knowing, 27:70)).

The verse under discussion refers to this situation and states that the abilities and strength of people who are made to live till their old age are gradually made to diminish by God. In other words, the phase of weakness with which a person began his life is returned to him. It is evident from this that all his abilities and his strengths are bestowed to him by God; He can take them away whenever he wants to and can take them away in such a manner that a person is helpless before Him; so unfortunate are the people who do not duly honour the favours of God and instead of being grateful to Him for receiving them they become arrogant.

Most lexicographers regard تنکیس and نکس to have the same meaning ie. "to make something to turn back." However, in my opinion, the former word also encompasses gradual progression in it. In other words, تنکیس would mean "to make something turn back gradually." The Qur'ān has used both these words and at both places this difference is found. The word خلق here means خلقت (physical shape) and it is used thus in the Qur'ān.

Section V: Verses (69-83)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. Here the topic discussed in the opening verses is taken up once again. Readers may remember that the *sūrah* began with an oath sworn by the Qur'ān replete with wisdom. This Book was presented as a proof of Muḥammad's prophethood. He was assured that through this Book the Almighty has done a great favour to the unlettered Arabs; yet only those will believe in it who have the vibrancy of life in them. After this introductory passage, the discourse shifted to the validation of the various claims made by the Qur'ān. Here too, in the concluding section of the *sūrah*, this sequence can be seen in a new style. First, the Hypocrites are refuted who regarded the Qur'ān to

be poetry and the Prophet (sws) to be a poet; after this, it is explained which people will be influenced by this Book and which will remain deprived of it. After this, some very prominent signs of God's providence are alluded to in order to once again invite people to show gratitude to God – something that informs the basis of this *sūrah*. After this, the discourse shifts to sound assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not grieve on what people are saying to oppose him; There should be no wonder if these people make fun of him as they are the ones who do not even refrain from phabtiyan on God; he should consign their matter to God. Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُّبِينٌ (٦٩) لِيُنذِرَ مَن كَانَ حَيًّا وَيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٠) أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ (٧١) وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ (٧٢) وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَمَشَارِبُ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٧٣) وَاتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللهِ آلِهَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٧٤) لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُندٌ مُّحْضَرُونَ (٧٥) فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٦) أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٧) وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ (٧٨) قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧٩) الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنتُم مِّنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ (٨٠) أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُم بَلَى وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨١) إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٨٢) فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٨٣)

And We have not taught him poetry nor is this befitting for him. This is but a reminder and an eloquent Qur'an so that it may inform those who have life in them and leave the disbelievers with no excuse. (69-70)

Have they not reflected that among things We have made with Our hands We made beasts for them. Thus they are their masters. And We have made them subservient to them; hence they ride on some and obtain sustenance from others; and they have other uses in them also and things to drink. So do they not show gratitude? (71-73)

And in the hope of being helped they have set up other gods besides God. They will not be able to help them: in fact, they will become armies brought forth. So let not what they say grieve you. We know what they

conceal and what they reveal. (74-76)

Has man not reflected that We created him from a drop of fluid; then he became an open rival. And he made fun of Me and forgot his own creation. He says: "Now, who can give life to bones when they have decayed?" Say: "He who created the first time will give them life." And He is full aware of every creature. It is He Who produced fire from a lush green tree and lo! You light a fire from it. Is He Who created the heavens and the earth not capable of making creations like them? Yes, He is capable and He is the real Creator and all-knowing. His matter is such that when He intends to do something He need only say: "Be," and it is. So glory be to Him Who has control of all things and to Him shall you all be returned. (77-83)

Explanation

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُّبِينٌ (٦٩)[46]

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in عَلَّمْنَـاهُ is the Prophet (sws). This is actually a refutation of people who regard the Qur'ān to be poetry and the Prophet (sws) to be a poet. It is said that neither has God taught him poetry nor is poetry befitting for him. This is an answer given to those who would regard the sublime eloquence of the Qur'ān to be a product of the powerful elocution of its presenter. Their purpose was to mitigate the effect of the Qur'ān on the masses lest they believe in its divinity by being influenced by its powerful nature. In order to lure their masses away from the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) they would say that indeed the Qur'ān is a very eloquent and articulate Book; however, this eloquence and articulacy is not because it is a divine revelation as is being claimed by its presenter; it is potent and persuasive much like the powerful poetry composed by their outstanding poets and literati; hence, at best this person should be considered as a great poet instead of a prophet and messenger and this Qur'ān should be regarded as poetry and not a divine revelation. The Qur'ān has refuted this notion in various styles at various instances specially in Sūrah Shu'arā' the difference between a prophet and a poet which even a common man can see is pointed out in detail. Those who would like to see its details may look it up.

The expression وَمَـا يَنـبَغِي لَهُ means that poetry is something of lesser in status to a prophet. This has two aspects:

One of them is that there is a world of difference between the traditions and characteristics of prophets and poets. In Sūrah Shu'arā' three

46. And We have not taught him poetry nor is this befitting for him. This is but a reminder and an eloquent Qur'ān.

characteristics of poets are mentioned and all three are against the stature of the institution of prophethood.

Their first characteristic mentioned is that they only make tall claims and do not practice what they preach. On the contrary, a prophet practices the most what he preaches.

Their second characteristic is that their compositions are a collection of contradictory thoughts; he wanders in every field and in one breath talks both of belief and disbelief. On the contrary, there exists tremendous harmony between the principles and corollaries of every thing he utters and a great sequence and correspondence in what he says.

Their third characteristic is that only people who have strayed away from the truth follow poets. On the contrary, the followers of the prophets of God are noble and pious people.

Although there are some exceptions to this rule referred to by the Qur'ān yet they are very few. For this reason, the Almighty has protected his prophets from the evil touch of poetry.

The second aspect which makes poetry something of lesser in status to a prophet is that all poetry relates to emotions: it arises from emotions and also effects emotions. It stimulates good emotions if its content is good and evil ones if its content is evil. Outside this sphere it has no influence. The mission of the prophets of God does not relate merely to emotions; it relates to every aspect of human life; hence its real appeal is to human intellect which guides a person in every sphere of life. It is not that only the emotions of people need to be stimulated; people also need to be morally instructed, their mistakes need to be rectified and they need to be taught the individual and collective principles of life and also instructed in the rules and principles of state-craft. In short, prophets of God need to instruct and teach people how to achieve success in this world and the next. All this obviously are beyond the scope of poetry. These needs cannot be fulfilled by a poet and his poetical compositions; they can only be fulfilled through a clear book from God. For this reason, God did make his messengers as poets but the recipients of His Books.

Here it is possible that a question may arise in the mind of some that if poetry is something lesser in stature to prophethood and its objectives, then why did God give the Psalms to David (sws) in the form of poetry? The answer to this question is that the real book of guidance for David (sws) was the Torah and not the Psalms. The status of the Psalms is that of an addendum to the Torah which is composed of prayers, supplications and sermons and wise counsels of David (sws). Together with the Torah, it is a very blessed treasure trove of wisdom; however, without the Torah it is not sufficient to fulfill the objective for which messengers of God are sent.

The words إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُّبِينٌ imply that this Qur'ān is not a collection of poetry; on the contrary, it is a great reminder and a clear book of guidance so that it can become a means of reformation and guidance of people. It reminds people of the facts innately found in human nature; it also reminds people of the history of divine guidance that stretches from Adam (sws) to Muḥammad (sws) and also reminds them of the consequences they will have to face in this world and the next if they deny the messengers of God.

The words قُرْآنٌ مُّبِينٌ refer to the fact that the Qur'ān is a comprehensive book of guidance which has unambiguous, sound and well-reasoned advice for every aspect of life. It explains every fact so clearly that no doubt remains in the mind of a fair person. What relation can such a well-reasoned, clear and codified book have with poetry! In the whole annals of mankind, no poet has produced such a book.

لِيُنذِرَ مَن كَانَ حَيًّا وَيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٠)[47]

The subject of the verb يُنذِرَ is the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). This verse states the objective of revelation of the Qur'ān: the Almighty has revealed this Qur'ān to His Messenger so that through it he can warn people who are intellectually and spiritually alive. As for those whose hearts are dead, they will not be able to benefit from this Book. However, the truth shall stand conclusively conveyed to them and they will not be able to present this excuse before God that no warner had come to them otherwise they would have paid heed to his guidance.

The verb انذار (warning) here is in its complete meaning and the word حَيٌّ refers to those whose hearts are alive. A warner warns everyone yet his warning is effective for those whose nature is alive and vibrant; this because it is only such people who pay heed as is evident from the verse: إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ (٣٦: ١١) (You can only warn those who pay heed, (36:11)). Since only such people can really be regarded as the living, the Qur'ān calls only them as the living. Those who are devoid of this capability are not alive; they are dead. Thus about such people, the Qur'ān states: وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُوْرِ (٣٥: ٢٢) (you are not one who can recite out to those who are in the graves, (35:22)). The style adopted in the verse under discussion sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) as well. His task is to awaken the living; it is not his responsibility to awaken the dead. This topic is discussed repeatedly in the Qur'ān in

47. So that it may inform those who have life in them and leave the disbelievers with no excuse.

various styles.

The word قَوْل refers to the statement given by the Almighty in response to the challenge thrown by Satan. He had said that for the guidance of Adam's progeny, He will reveal His Book and guidance and that those who follow Satan even after this will be cast into Hell by Him.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ (٧١) وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ (٧٢) وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَمَشَارِبُ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٧٣)[48]

In order to understand the context and occasion of these verses, readers may take a look at verses 33-35 of this *sūrah*. Just as there after referring to the warning sounded by Qur'ān and to its message of monotheism attention was directed to certain signs of God's providence and then the addressees were asked to show gratitude to God, here too after directing their attention to certain signs of God's providence that substantiate the preaching of the Qur'ān, they have been asked to show gratitude to God. In other words, what was said in the introductory section of the *sūrah* is once again taken up in the closing section in a new style.

The verse أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ states that do they not reflect that God created beasts through His power and wisdom and then made man their master. He uses them to his advantage with full freedom and fulfils his needs. The expression مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا implies the same thing as what expression وَ مَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ that occurred earlier in verse 35 implied. The implication is that these things by their very existence show that only God's power and wisdom has created them; no other being could dare do so or bring them into man's subservience. It is only the graciousness of the Almighty that He created these things through His power and wisdom and made man their master. The implication is that this situation invites man to reflect whether this great blessing of God imposes any responsibility on him or not? The Qur'ān wants to direct the attention of people to this question and wants to inform them of its consequences but these foolish people regard this reminding to be poetry.

The words وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ imply that it is only God's providence and mercy that made these beasts conducive to man's

48. Have they not reflected that among things We have made with Our hands We have made beasts for them. Thus they are their masters. And We made them subservient to them; hence they ride on some and obtain sustenance from others; and they have other uses in them also and things to drink. So do they not show gratitude?

financial needs and then made them so submissive to him that he can use them in any way he wants to. Had God not intended, neither would these beasts have been conducive to man's needs nor could he have been able to make him submissive to him. After all, there are so many animals in this world which are neither useful to man with regard to his needs nor can they be made docile like beasts. Even if he is able to vanquish them, they may become a burden for him but never useful for him to lift his burden. The verse states that among these beasts are some which are used by man as a means of transport and others which he uses as fodder.

The words وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَمَشَارِبُ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ imply that besides providing transport and fodder they also provide many other benefits: their hides, their hair, their bones and their faeces – in short almost every part of their bodies is useful to mankind. Similarly, their milk and its by-products like yogurt and curds are delicious, healthy and nutritious for man. The expression أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ means that do not these favours and blessings entail an obligation on them and not demand from them that they should show gratitude and be obedient to the God who has bestowed these favours on them. These favours by their very existence are giving this message to man and the Book of God too is reminding man of this very message. The implication is that why are people trying to evade the Qur'ān by regarding it to be poetry instead of understanding and believing in such a clear fact.

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٧٤) لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُندٌ مُّحْضَرُونَ (٧٥)[49]

The implication of this verse is that instead of facing this clear fact they adopted back doors to evade it. What was befitting for them was that they recognized the rights and obligations towards the God Whose favours they were benefitting from and fulfilled them. On the contrary, what they did was that they invented some false idols and by ritually serving these idols think that if ever God seizes them, then they will be able to evade His punishment through the help of these idols.

The verse لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُندٌ مُّحْضَرُونَ implies that not only will these idols not be able to help these people in the slightest way, they too as accomplices of these people will be called to the presence of God. Then, the Almighty will decide the punishment they deserve.

49. And in the hope of being helped they have set up other gods besides God. They will not be able to help them: in fact, they will become armies brought forth.

فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٦)[50]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). He is told that he should bear what these people say and not be stricken by grief. Let them call him by whatever names like poet, madman and fabricator they want to call him with. However, he should rest assured that the Almighty is aware of not only their secret conspiracies and pranks, He is also aware of what they overtly say. The implication is that when God knows everything, why should the Prophet (sws) be sorrowful; he is doing God's work and should keep on doing it; he should also trust that God alone is enough to deal with his enemies.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٧) وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ (٧٨)[51]

The word إِنسَانُ signify the Quraysh who are under discussion. This general word is used to express disgust.

The expression ضرب مثـل means to cite an example or say some words of wisdom as well to utter sarcastic and make fun. Here this latter meaning is implied.

These verses are connected to those before them through two aspects: It relates to the assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) in the previous verses and also to the obligations the Quraysh owe to the providence of God mentioned in the verses prior to these.

The connection to the first of the above is that the Prophet (sws) is told that what more can be expected from the arrogant who phabtee chust on God and while forgetting their creation very haughtily question that who can raise life from dead and decayed bones if they pass sarcastic remarks on the Prophet (sws) and call him a poet and madman.

The connection to the second is that just as providence entails gratitude and believing in one God, it also entails a day of reward and punishment. This aspect is explained at various places in this exegesis. However, such is the meanness of man that in spite of benefitting from the favours of God he is not ready to acknowledge that a day of reward and punishment is bound to come where he shall be held accountable about these favours;

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50. So let not what they say grieve you. We know what they conceal and what they reveal.

51. Has man not reflected that We created him from a drop of fluid; yet he became an open rival. And he made fun of Me and forgot his own creation. He says: "Now, who can give life to bones when they have decayed?"

also, whenever he is reminded of this fact, he becomes a rival and while forgetting how he was created sarcastically asks that who can raise dead and decayed bones to life. The verse states that he should be told that the one who gave them life the first time will raise them to life again. If creating them the first time was not of a bother to Him, how can it be bothersome for Him to re-create them?

The words وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ imply that such a stupid question can only be asked by someone who has forgotten his own process of creation. He who remembers that God created him from clay will never ask such a question. If he does pose this question, then it means that he has become God's rival who is ready to fight with Him

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧٩)[52]

The word خَلْق here signifies creatures. In other words, God is aware of all His creatures. In Sūrah Mulk, the words used are: أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (٦٧: ١٤) (Would He who not know Who has created, (67:14)). No one should be deceived by the fact that God will forget him once he dies and mixes in the dust. He is aware of every bit and part of their body. In Sūrah Qāf, it is said: قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنقُصُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ وَعِندَنَا كِتَابٌ حَفِيظٌ (٥٠: ٤) (Even what the earth consumes of their bodies is in Our notice and with Us is also a book that keeps record, (50:4)).

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنتُم مِّنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ (٨٠)[53]

The implication is that they should not regard it improbable that life will emerge from ashes and clay. They often see the creation of elements from opposing elements. By striking two branches of a lush green tree they create fire. How can it be improbable for the God Who has shown this majesty to make life appear from ashes and clay. The expression الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ refers to trees found in certain areas of Arabia and those who travel through deserts use them as firestone.

Some of our earlier scholars have interpreted this verse differently; however, I find it to be far-fetched. The interpretation given above is absolutely clear. Certain trees found in Arabia were used as firestone by people. Books also mention their names. If today these trees do not exist or rarely exist, then this does not matter. Various things continue to go extinct in this world by the directive of God. If the foremost addressees

52. Say: "He who created the first time will give them life." And he is fully aware of every creature.

53. It is He Who produced fire from a lush green tree and lo! You light a fire from it.

of the Qur'ān were aware of such tees, then this reasoning is very appropriate. The real basis of this reasoning is that examples of opposing elements coming into being from opposing elements exist in this world and such is the established nature of this fact that no one can dispute it. Who does not know that the greatest of fires is found within water!

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُم بَلَى وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨١)[54]

This verse refutes the notion of improbability of re-creation of man in another way: How can the God Who created these heavens and the earth without any difficulty not be able to create people like them? They should think which is the more difficult of the two tasks. The words بَلَى وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ are an answer to this question by God Himself. The attributes of God mentioned are meant to substantiate the earlier premise. It is said that He is the real Creator having all knowledge. In verse 79, the words used are: وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ (and he is fully aware of every creature). Here precisely the same thing is said in much more powerful words. It is emphatically said that God is the supreme creator; no one should be misled to believe that He got tired after creating this world or His power of creativity has finished; on the contrary, He is fresh as before and is fully aware of the ingredients of all His creatures; whenever He wants He will bring each and every part together to re-create them.

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٨٢)[55]

The implication of this verse is that no one should remain in the misconception that to create some thing God needs factories, investment raw material or machines. God does not need anything to implement His intentions. When He intends to do something, He only gives a directive and His intention materializes according to this directive.

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٨٣)[56]

The word مَلَكُوت means "authority and sovereignty." Here at the end,

54. Is He Who created the heavens and the earth not capable of making creations like them? Yes, He is capable and He is the real Creator and all-knowing.

55. His matter is such that when He intends to do something He need only say: "Be," and it is.

56. So glory be to Him Who has control of all things and to Him shall you all be returned.

the addressees of the *sūrah* are warned that since the God in Whose hands are the reins of everything and to Whom everyone must return is free of any defect or shortcoming, hence they too should accept Him in this exalted capacity and continue to extol Him. No one is His partner in His being, attributes or rights. He is beyond and above any form of association. He has not created this world without a purpose. Hence, each person will have to come forth before Him and be held accountable for his deeds. It is not the least difficult for Him to create people again once they die and decay; He has power over everything. His knowledge embraces everything; nothing is beyond His observation; no word or deed of a person is hidden from Him.

With help and guidance of God, the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* reaches its completion. فلحمد لله على ذالك (so gratitude of God be on this)

Raḥmānābād,
8th March, 1975

Sūrah Ṣāffāt

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* forms a pair with Sūrah Yāsīn, the previous *sūrah*. There is no basic difference between the central themes of the two *sūrahs.* Just as the principle topics of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter are discussed in the previous *sūrahs* of this group, they are also discussed in this particular *sūrah*; however, the nature of arguments and sequence of the discourse are different. Monotheism which is the soul to the body of this whole group is also evident in this *sūrah.* Yet, in this *sūrah*, a specific aspect of monotheism – refutation of divinity imputed to angels – is taken up in detail. The events of the Day of Judgement are mentioned in this *sūrah* in such a way that the mutual row between the masses and the leaders of the Idolaters is highlighted. The history of the prophets is also concisely mentioned in this *sūrah.* This history shows that nations which denied their messengers were destroyed by the Almighty; only the messengers and their followers were successful.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-10): Angels remain in the presence of the Almighty to always obey His directives and fervently praise and extol Him. Through their very deeds, they bear witness that they are very obedient to God and are not His associates, as certain foolish people think. Only the angels have proximity to God. The jinn and devils do not have access to the High Realm (Mala' A'lā). If they try to overhear the secrets of this realm, angels push them away and shooting stars pursue them; hence they are not able to eavesdrop on these secrets. Those who regard the jinn and the devils to be a means of divulging these secrets are not aware of the exalted status of God.

Verses (11-39): People who were making fun of the Hereafter are admonished. What will befall them and their leaders on the Day of Judgement is portrayed. The purpose of this is to assure the Prophet (sws) so that he should ignore their arrogant behaviour; a day is about to come when their masses will curse their leaders for stopping them from following the Prophet of God; in response, the leaders will rebuke their followers that they themselves are to blame for denying the truth after it

had become evident to them.

Verses (40-61): A description of the reward of the believers who in spite of the efforts of their companions and leaders who wanted to lead them astray continued to support a messenger of God. Certain aspects of the eternal bliss they shall attain on the Day of Judgement are referred to.

Verses (62-70): The fate of those who in their frenzy of blindly followed their forefathers opposed a messenger of God and his practice is alluded to.

Verses (71-148): Historical evidence is provided on the fact that nations which denied their respective messengers after these messengers had warned them were destroyed; only those people survived who followed their messenger. The blessing and mercy of God is reserved for the messengers of God and those who follow them.

Verses (149-182): In this concluding section, the discourse coherently returns to the opening topic of the *sūrah*: through the tongue of Gabriel, witness is borne to the fact that the fraternity of the angels continue to follow the directives of God with fervour and remain fervently busy in praising and extolling Him, and that angels are obedient servants of God and not His associates or partners. At the end, Muḥammad (sws) is assured that God's help and dominance over his opponents are reserved for him and his followers; these opponents are destined to lose. They are the ones who at first waited for the arrival of God's messenger; yet when he came, they started to vehemently oppose him because of jealousy and arrogance. He should ignore them and keep doing his job while exercising restraint. Success is destined for the messengers of God alone.

Section I: Verses (1-10)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا (١) فَالزَّاجِرَاتِ زَجْرًا (٢) فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا (٣) إِنَّ إِلَٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ (٤) رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ (٥) إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةٍ الْكَوَاكِبِ (٦) وَحِفْظًا مِّن كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ (٧) لَا يَسَّمَّعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَى وَيُقْذَفُونَ مِن كُلِّ جَانِبٍ (٨) دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ (٩) إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ (١٠)

Angels who range themselves in ranks and remain present bear witness; then admonish [devils] and remember [God] that your God is

one. He alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them, and He alone is the Lord of the Eastern borders. (1-5)

Indeed, We have decked the lower heaven with the adornment of stars and have fully protected it from the incursion of all rebellious devils. And they are not able to overhear from the High Realm and they are pushed from all sides, to drive them away and for them is an eternal torment except that if someone suddenly eavesdrops on something a dazzling flame pursues him. (6-10)

Explanation

وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا (١)[1]

The particle وَ denotes an oath. The oaths sworn by the Almighty in the Qur'ān are not meant to venerate the object by which the oaths are sworn; they are meant to substantiate a claim. My mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī has dealt in detail on this issue in his book *al-Im'ān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān*. I have translated this Arabic work into Urdu. Those interested may look it up. In the light of this denotation of the particle وَ, if the verse is translated as "angels who range themselves in ranks and remain present bear witness," then it will truly portray the meaning of the oath.

The word الصَّافَّاتِ occurs here as an attribute of the angels, and this is evident from a succeeding verse of this *sūrah* through the tongue of Gabriel: وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (٣٧: ١٦٤- ١٦٦) (And for each of us is an appointed place and We stand arrayed before God. And We glorify Him. (37:164-166))

It is evident from concomitant indications that those angels are referred to here that belong to the High Realm and stand arrayed in ranks around the throne of the Almighty. In Sūrah Zumar, they are mentioned in the following words: وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ (٣٩: ٧٥) (And you shall see the angels encircling the throne of God, giving glory to their Lord while expressing praise for Him. (39:75))

فَالزَّاجِرَاتِ زَجْرًا (٢)[2]

The word زجر means "to scold and drive away someone". It refers to another attribute of these angels: if the devils try to access the High Realm they are driven away. The details of the arrangement made by the

1. Angels who range themselves in ranks.
2. And remain present, bear witness.

Almighty to prevent the devils from accessing the High Realm are coming up in the succeeding verses.

فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا (٣)[3]

This is the third attribute of the angels. These words refer precisely to the same thing as the one referred to by the words يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ of Sūrah Zumar cited earlier and by the words: وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (٣٩: ١٦٤) of this very *sūrah*. In other words, the angels praise and extol the Almighty.

Here a principle of the Arabic language must be kept in mind: when attributes are conjugated by the particle فَ as is the case here it signifies two things: firstly, all these attributes belong to a single entity; for this reason, the opinion of those who have regarded these attributes to belong to different entities is, in my opinion, linguistically incorrect; secondly, there occurs a gradual sequence in these attributes. According to my interpretation, it is evident that all these attributes belong to a single entity: the angels. It is also evident that there exits a sequence in these attributes the way it exists in our prayers. Just as we stand arrayed before God, seek refuge from Satan and then praise and extol God, in the same manner, angels too stand arrayed around the throne of the Almighty, then they rebuke Satan and after that praise and extol God.

إِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ (٤)[4]

This verse forms the complement of oath (*muqsam ‘alayh*). After presenting this worship and praising and extolling of the angels as witness, it is said: Your God is One. It is evident from this that extremely foolish are those who have made angels associates of God by regarding them as His daughters and are worshipping them hoping to receive their intercession. The actions of the angels openly negate these naïve people: these angels continue to worship God and praise and extol him, while these naïve people worship these angels by regarding them to be God’s partners.

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ (٥)[5]

This is the second enunciative (*khabar*) after the first. The implication

3. Then admonish [devils].

4. And remember [God] that your God is one.

5. He alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them, and He alone is the Lord of the Eastern borders.

is that it is God the one and alone who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them and He alone is the master of all the east and the west. In other words, no one should misconstrue that God has delegated the administration of the far off areas of His unfathomable dominion to His partners. He is not dependent on anyone for help. He alone is the master of every nook and corner of His universe and directly administers them. If there is any role of the angels in this universe it is not because they are God's partners; they are His obedient ambassadors and workers. Whatever they do is in compliance with the directives of God.

The plural مَشَارِق refers to the vastness of the east. In Sūrah A'raf while explaining the word أَعْراف, I have explained that at times plurals of a word indicate their vastness and enormity. The words مَشَارِق and مَغَارب occur in the Qur'ān in this very sense. Similarly, when the purpose is to point to both sides of a thing, then at times the dual is used. Thus the words مَشْرِقَيْن and مَغْرِبَيْن are also used in the Qur'ān (55:17).

There is a suppression of the words رَبُّ الْمَغَارِبْ after رَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ on account of contextual indications because the West is subsumed under the East [as the sun rises from the East and gradually lights up the West]; when what is primary is mentioned, the secondary is understood to be subsumed under it. At some instances, the suppression is expressed in words as well, as for example: فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ (٧٠: ٤٠) (Nay! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We are powerful, (70-40)). Another reason for specifically mentioning the مَشَارِق could be that polytheists have worshipped the sun the most and the sun rises from the east.

إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاء الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةٍ الْكَوَاكِبِ (٦) وَحِفْظًا مِّن كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ (٧)[6]

In the preceding verses, it is mentioned that the naïve have regarded the angels to be God while the actual situation is that in the High Realm they continue to stand arrayed before God and remain busy in praising and extolling him. Now in these succeeding verses, it is mentioned that the naïve think that the devils have access to the High Realm from where they can eavesdrop on the news of the unknown world. Thus on this very expectation are they worshipped since they are a means to know such secrets. The fact of the matter is that no one has access to the High Realm. If a mischievous jinn tries to go near it, he is bombarded by a shower of meteors.

6. Indeed, We have decked the lower heavens with the adornment of stars and have fully protected it from the incursion of all rebellious devils.

The word حِفْظًا is a verbal noun of a suppressed verb meant to emphasize it. Thus, the actual construction is: حَفِظْنَاهَا حِفْظًا. Hence a precise translation would be: We fully protected the heavens from the incursions of the devils. It is evident from the verses under discussion that on the one hand stars are an embellishment for the lowest heaven and on the other these very stars are used by the Almighty to check the devils from accessing the High Realm. This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān in various styles. For example: وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاء الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِّلشَّيَاطِينِ (٦٧: ٥) (And We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them a means for bombardment on the devils, (67:5)). At another instance, it is said: وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِن كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ إِلاَّ مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥: ١٦–١٨) (And indeed, We have made posts in the sky and decked it with stars for the beholders and protected it from every accursed devil. And if anyone tries to covertly overhear the secrets of the High Realm, then he is pursued by a dazzling star. (15:16-18))

لَا يَسَّمَّعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَى وَيُقْذَفُونَ مِن كُلِّ جَانِبٍ (٨) دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ (٩)[7]

The negation of the verb in لَا يَسَّمَّعُونَ is meant to negate the purpose of the verb. In other words, the devils try to overhear the secrets of the High Realm but they are not able to even to do so. Whenever they try to do it, they are pelted from all sides. The word دُحُورًا means "to drive away" and "to repulse", and the word وَاصِبٌ means "eternal". In other words, they shall be accursed in this world in the manner just mentioned and in the Hereafter they will face eternal punishment.

إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ (١٠)[8]

What is implied by this verse is that after this secure arrangement to repel these devils there is no chance that they have access to the High Realm or its secrets. What a mischievous devil can do is that he can try to snatch some part of them. To stop such incursions also a shinning star pursues them from the forts of the heavens.

It is evident from all these details that neither are angels partners of God in any sense nor do devils have any access to the High Realm from where they can find out some information. Hence those who worship

7. And they are not able to over hear from the High realm and they are pushed from all sides, to drive them away and for them is an eternal torment except that if someone suddenly

8. Eavesdrops on something a dazzling flame pursues him.

angels by regarding them to be the favoured daughters of God are foolish and those who try to come into contact with the jinn by regarding them to be a means of procuring the secrets of God are also foolish. It may be kept in mind that the basis of polytheism and soothsaying of the Arabs was based on these two concepts. The Qur'ān by explaining the reality behind angels and the jinn has uprooted both these bases.

Section II: Verses (11-74)

Coming up are the details of the events of the Day of Judgement. The purpose is to bring to the fore the fate of the deities as well as of those who are worshipping these deities while leaving aside God. The way the leaders of the Idolaters and their followers will mutually curse one another, and the manner in which the believers adhered to the beliefs of monotheism and the Hereafter in spite of all the opposition are depicted.

Readers may not proceed to study these verses.

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَم مَّنْ خَلَقْنَا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُم مِّن طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ (١١) بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ (١٢) وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ (١٣) وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخِرُونَ (١٤) وَقَالُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥) أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (١٦) أَوَآبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ (١٧) قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ (١٨) فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنظُرُونَ (١٩) وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (٢٠) هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢١) احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٢٢) مِن دُونِ اللهِ فَاهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ (٢٣) وَقِفُوهُمْ إِنَّهُم مَّسْئُولُونَ (٢٤) مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنَاصَرُونَ (٢٥) بَلْ هُمُ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ (٢٦) وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٢٧) قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ (٢٨) قَالُوا بَل لَّمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٩) وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ بَلْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا طَاغِينَ (٣٠) فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ (٣١) فَأَغْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ (٣٢) فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (٣٣) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (٣٤) إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٣٥) وَيَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَتَارِكُوا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ (٣٦) بَلْ جَاء بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣٧) إِنَّكُمْ لَذَائِقُو الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ (٣٨) وَمَا

تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٩) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٤٠) أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (٤١) فَوَاكِهُ وَهُم مُّكْرَمُونَ (٤٢) فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٤٣) عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ (٤٤) يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِكَأْسٍ مِن مَّعِينٍ (٤٥) بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِّلشَّارِبِينَ (٤٦) لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنزَفُونَ (٤٧) وَعِندَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ (٤٨) كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ (٤٩) فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٥٠) قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ (٥١) يَقُولُ أَئِنَّكَ لَمِنْ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ (٥٢) أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ (٥٣) قَالَ هَلْ أَنتُم مُّطَّلِعُونَ (٥٤) فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاء الْجَحِيمِ (٥٥) قَالَ تَاللهِ إِنْ كِدتَّ لَتُرْدِينِ (٥٦) وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ (٥٧) أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ (٥٨) إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُولَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (٥٩) إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٦٠) لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلْ الْعَامِلُونَ (٦١) أَذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ (٦٢) إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظَّالِمِينَ (٦٣) إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ (٦٤) طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُؤُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ (٦٥) فَإِنَّهُمْ لَآكِلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ (٦٦) ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٦٧) ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ (٦٨) إِنَّهُمْ أَلْفَوْا آبَاءهُمْ ضَالِّينَ (٦٩) فَهُمْ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ (٧٠) وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٧١) وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِم مُّنذِرِينَ (٧٢) فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (٧٣) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٧٤)

So ask them: "Is it more difficult to create them or the things We have created?" We created them from clinging clay. In fact, you marvel while they make fun. And when they are reminded, they pay no heed. And when they see a sign, they make fun of it and say: "This is but plain magic. What! When we are dead and turned to dust and bones, shall we be raised life; we and our forefathers also?" (11-17)

Answer them: "Yes you shall be raised and humiliated as well. Thus it shall be just one shout and they will look about. And they will say: "Woe betide us! This is the Day of Reckoning." This is the Judgement Day which you had been denying. (18-21)

"Gather those who have wronged their souls and their companions and those who they have been worshipping besides God. Then lead all of them to the path of Hell. And hold them back a little; they also need to be asked something. What is the matter; you are not helping each other? In fact, today they seem to be very obedient. (22-26)

And they will turn to one another asking: "It is you who came to us from the right …" They will reply: "In fact, you were the ones who did not embrace faith. And we had no power over you: in fact, you yourselves were a people rebellious. Thus the verdict of Our Lord came true for us. We will have to taste it. We misled you; we ourselves were among the misled." Hence on that day all of them will share the torment. (27-33)

Thus shall We deal with the evil-doers. Such was their matter that when they were told that there is no deity but God, they would show arrogance and say: "Should we renounce our gods at the behest of a mad poet?" In fact, he has come with the truth and has come in confirmation of the predictions of the prophets. (34-37)

Indeed, you shall have to taste the grievous torment. And you are being rewarded for precisely what you had been doing. Only, the special servants of God shall be protected from it. It is these people for whom there shall be sustenance marked: fruits and they will be in honour in gardens of delight reclining face to face on soft couches; for them goblets of pure wine will be in circulation absolutely crystal clear; delightfully delicious to those who drink it; neither will it be harmful nor will they feel tired because of it. And for them will be bashful large-eyed maidens as if they are sheltered eggs of ostriches. (38-48)

Thus they will turn to one another questioning. A speaker from them will say: "I had a friend who used to say: 'Are you among those who believe in the Hereafter – when we are dead and turned to dust and bones, will we be brought to account?"' He will say: "Take a little peep down." So he will look down and see his friend in the very midst of Hell. "By the Lord," he will say to him, "you almost ruined me! But for the grace of God I would have surely have been among the assailed. Is it not a fact that we will never die after our first death neither will we be punished?" Surely, that is supreme success. To this end let every one who tries should try. (49-61)

Is this not a better welcome or the *zaqqūm* tree? We have made this tree a trial for the unjust. It is a tree that grows in the innermost part of Hell, bearing fruit like the heads of devils. They shall feed on it, and with it they shall cram their bellies. Then there will be for them a mixture of boiling water. Then to Hell shall they return. They found their fathers erring. Then they also ran in their footsteps. And most before them among the ancients also went astray. And We sent Our warners to them. So observe the fate of those who had been warned. Only Our true servants remained protected from this fate. (66-74)

Explanation

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَم مَّنْ خَلَقْنَا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُم مِّن طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ (١١)[9]

This verse discusses the possibility of the advent of Day of Judgement before the discourse goes on to discuss the events of that Day. People who deny the Prophet's warning about the Hereafter because they think that raising the dead to life is something improbable are posed a question through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). He is told to ask them whether it is more difficult to create the heavens, the earth, the seas, the mountains, the sun and the moon or human beings. So how can the God Who is able to create these things out of nothingness not be able to create a trivial thing as a human being again. In Sūrah Mu'min, this subject is mentioned in the following words: لَخَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٠: ٥٧) (Creating the heavens and the earth is more difficult than creating people; yet most people know not, (40:57)). In Sūrah Nāzi'āt, the words are: أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ بَنَاهَا (٧٩ :٢٧) (Is it more difficult to create you or the sky; He made it? (27: 79))

The expression طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ means "sticking or clinging clay". What is implied is that the Almighty created all these things with clinging clay; no particular raw material was needed for this creation so that their recreation needed an effort to make that material available. The clay with which they were made is at the disposal of the Almighty in large quantities. Whenever God wants, He can recreate them; when it was not difficult for Him to create them the first time, how can it be difficult to re-create them?

The use of مَّنْ in أَم مَّنْ خَلَقْنَا diverts the mind to the fact that the comparison is between creating angels and the jinn. In this case the meaning would be: Ask them whether creating them was more difficult or other beings We created [like the angels and the jinn]; We created these people from clay and the angels and the jinn from light and fire respectively; so if We are capable of creating these creatures how can We be powerless to create them again.

بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ (١٢)[10]

The verse states that for the Prophet (sws) this rejection on the part of his addressees is astonishing, and for them this claim of his is the reason that they make fun of him. He is wondering how can a sensible person

9. So ask them: "Is it more difficult to create them or the things We have created?" We created them from clinging clay.

10. In fact, you marvel while they make fun.

deny such an obvious reality and they are making fun of him by saying that how can a sensible and sagacious person make such a claim. The implication is that he and his addressees are as far apart from one another as the East and the West; the Prophet (sws) is not rightly judging how far apart they are from him and hence their attitude is a cause of worry for him.

وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ (١٣)[11]

This verse states the essential consequence of this vast mental gap: when their way of thinking so different that what to the Prophet (sws) is obvious is a matter of jest for them, then all his reminders and warnings are useless for them; whatever advice they are sounded goes waste; no reasoning has any effect on them.

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخِرُونَ (١٤) وَقَالُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥)[12]

The verse says that the greatest of miracles cannot convince such people. They do try to tease and harass the Prophet (sws) by demanding to see the Hereafter yet when a sign is shown to them, they make fun of it and call it plain magic.

أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (١٦) أَوَآبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ (١٧)[13]

These verses give words to the fun they make. They ask: When we die and decay into clay and bones, will we be raised to life again? Even more astonishing for them is the fact that their forefathers too will be raised to life; they think that all these things are far away from sense and reason. Hence, they think that those who threaten them of these things are mad.

قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ (١٨)[14]

Since the question was raised by them out of jest its answer is given in a stern tone. They are told that indeed they shall be raised to life again and at that time they will be disgraced and humiliated.

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11. And when they are reminded, they pay no heed.

12. And when they see a sign, they make fun of it and say: "This is but plain magic.

13. What! When we are dead and turned to dust and bones, shall we be raised life; we and our forefathers also?"

14. Answer them: "Yes you shall be raised and humiliated as well.

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنظُرُونَ (١٩)[15]

The verse implies that these people should not mislead themselves by thinking that the Almighty will have to make a special effort to recreate them. This will happen through a mere shout. With the sounding of this scream they will suddenly rise from their graves and start to look around. In Sūrah Nāzi'āt, the words used are: فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ (٧٩: ١٣-١٤) (It will be just a single shout, then, all of a sudden, they will be standing in a ground, (79:13-14)).

The horror and dread found in this style does not need any words for its expression.

وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (٢٠)[16]

When the Day of Hereafter which they are so arrogantly denying today arrives, they will curse themselves and say that what they had been denying has arrived.

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢١)[17]

This is the reply they will receive from the angels: Yes this is the very day you had been denying.

احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٢٢) مِن دُونِ اللهِ فَاهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ (٢٣)[18]

The expression الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا refers to the polytheists because polytheism is the greatest injustice. Contextual indication shows that the allusion is to the leaders among the polytheists.

The word أَزْوَاج here is used for companions, followers and associates.

The expression مَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ refers to the jinn deities they associated with God and the idols and stones they worshipped.

On the Day of Judgement, the Almighty will direct the angels to gather all of them and lead them to Hell.

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15. Thus it shall be just one shout and they will look about. And they will say:

16. "Woe betide us! This is the Day of Reckoning."

17. This is the Judgement Day which you had been denying.

18. "Gather those who have wronged their souls and their companions and those who they have been worshipping besides God. Then lead all of them to the path of Hell.

وَقِفُوهُمْ إِنَّهُم مَّسْئُولُونَ (٢٤) مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنَاصَرُونَ (٢٥) بَلْ هُمُ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ (٢٦)[19]

These verses portray the humiliation that will occur on that day.

It will be said: Alright! Stop them for a while so that a question can be posed to them.

The words مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنَاصَرُونَ express this question: Why is it that they are not mutually helping themselves today? In the previous world you were the flag bearers of one another but today neither are the leaders helping their followers nor are the followers being of help to their leaders; neither are those worshipped seem to be of any benefit to their worshippers nor are the worshippers showing any emotions for their deities; everyone is busy in his own self; now is the time for selflessness but everyone has become selfish.

The word إِسْتِسْلام means "to consign oneself" and "to be obedient". The expression بَلْ هُمُ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ means that today these people have become very obedient and submissive; till yesterday they were supercilious and arrogant; today they have laid down their arms.

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٢٧)[20]

The word تَسَاءُل connotes "mutual questioning" and in the succeeding verses details are forthcoming about the altercation that will take place between the leaders and their followers.

قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ (٢٨) قَالُوا بَل لَّمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٩)[21]

Contextual indication shows that first verse is uttered by the masses and second by the leaders. In other words, the masses will say to their leaders: "you are responsible for this dire situation; it is you who always surrounded us from the right and the left so that we were not able to hear out the Prophet of God; if you had not impeded us we would have definitely embraced faith." Leaders will immediately interject and say that this blame of theirs is totally baseless; they would never have embraced faith.

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19. And hold them back a little; they also need to be asked something. What is the matter; you are not helping each other? In fact, today they seem to be very obedient.

20. And they will turn to one another.

21. Asking: "It is you who came to us from the right …" They will reply: "In fact, you were the ones who did not embrace faith.

Our exegetes have faced a lot of difficulty in interpreting the expression تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ; the reason is that they have failed to grasp its rather unique style. The Qur'ān has employed this subtle style at many instances wherein as soon as someone initiates a conversation an addressee interrupts him and tries to respond to him forthwith in order to absolve himself from the blame cast. I have referred to some examples of this style in the preceding *sūrahs*; some very telling examples will be seen in the succeeding *sūrahs*.

The style adopted in this expression is precisely the same. As soon as the masses will try to blame their leader and would utter the words: you would come to us from the right … their leaders would understand what they want to say viz. "you people would come to us from the right and left to stop us from listening to what the Prophet (sws) has to say to us." So, as soon as these followers utter the words عَنِ الْيَمِينِ (from the right), these leaders will take initiative and intervene and start to defend themselves. It is to portray this intervention and interjection of theirs that the Qur'ān has merely mentioned the words عَنِ الْيَمِينِ so that it becomes evident from the very style of the discourse that a day will come when the leaders will not even let their followers who are blindly following them complete their sentence; they will interject and declare their own acquittal. Verses 31-33 of Sūrah Sabā' have already portrayed the altercation between the leaders and their followers. Readers may look it up.

وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ بَلْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا طَاغِينَ (٣٠)[22]

The word سُلْطَانٌ means "force and authority". The leaders will continue their response by saying that they could never have forcibly stopped the masses from accepting faith and hence this blame is false; they would go on to address the masses and tell them that it is they who were disobedient and haughty because even after the truth had become evident to them they did not follow it and instead chose to follow their leaders.

فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ (٣١) فَأَغْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ (٣٢)[23]

The above sentences further cite what the leaders will say: "There is no use blaming one another; we are sinners and you are sinners; for this reason, the prediction of God that He had made in response to the

22. And we had no power over you: in fact, you yourselves were a people rebellious.

23. Thus the verdict of Our Lord came true for us. We will have to taste it. We misled you; we ourselves were among the misled."

challenge of Satan has materialized; He had said that He will fill the belly of Hell with Satan and all his followers; we will now have to necessarily taste the punishment which is ordained for wretches like us." The words فَأَغْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ addressed by these leaders to their followers imply: "We would have been blameworthy if we were virtuous and we wanted to make you evil; we tried to make you like us; it was your lack of vision that you followed us and even greater a lack of vision is that you are blaming us for the fate you met for following us! Alas! How can we harvest good from evil!"

فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (٣٣)[24]

The verse states that the excuse of the masses that others are responsible for their error will be of no avail to them on that day. The Almighty has granted enough sense to each person so that he can distinguish between good and evil especially when those calling to the truth are present to challenge evil. Hence, both the masses and the leaders will share this punishment.

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (٣٤) إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٣٥) وَيَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَتَارِكُوا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَجْنُونٍ (٣٦)[25]

Once the events of the Hereafter are narrated, these verses link them with the addressees of the Qur'ān: this is not merely the account of others; the Almighty deals in this manner with all criminals. Their crime was that when they were invited to profess faith in the One God, they would arrogantly draw away and express that why should they leave their deities because of a mad poet. So if people today make the same statement about their prophet, what is the reason that they will not be dealt with in the same manner as their predecessors. God deals in the same way with all sinners.

بَلْ جَاء بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣٧)[26]

This verse answers the Quraysh: he who is inviting them to the belief

24. Hence on that day all of them will share the torment.

25. Thus shall We deal with the evil-doers. Such was their matter that when they were told that there is no deity but God, they would show arrogance and say: "Should we renounce our gods at the behest of a mad poet?"

26. In fact, he has come with the truth and has come in confirmation of the predictions of the prophets.

of monotheism and warning them of God's punishment is not a mad person or a poet; on the contrary, he is informing them of a certain happening. A very clear argument to validate his prophethood is that all messengers from Abraham (sws) to Jesus (sws) have predicted his arrival and his arrival corroborates these predictions and the teachings of these prophets of God; this person is neither a stranger to them nor are his teachings unique. The previous messengers have given news of his arrival and the previous scriptures corroborate his teachings. If they are not aware of these facts, they should ask the People of the Book; the honest among them will attest to these facts. Since all these premises have already been discussed in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, I have just hinted at them.

إِنَّكُمْ لَذَائِقُو الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ (٣٨) وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٩)[27]

These verses imply that the Quraysh should not regard the punishment the messenger of God is informing them of to be a product of his fancy and frenzy; it is a certain reality. If they deny him, then they shall necessarily have to face this woeful punishment; they shall not be wronged in the slightest manner and they shall be recompensed exactly according to their deeds.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٤٠)[28]

The exception here is severed (منقطع). The implication is that the above referred to fate will be faced by every person; only those servants of God will remain protected from it who are chosen by His mercy. I have continued to allude to the fact that God chooses only those for His mercy and blessings who deserve this selection because of their faith and deeds. The word مُخْلَصْ is used to point to the fact that whatever a person receives he receives because of God's mercy and favour; no other being has the authority to grant people any favour as understood by the Idolaters.

أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (٤١)[29]

The verse states that it is these people for whom there shall be known sustenance with God. What is meant is that their timetable for eating and

27. Indeed, you shall have to taste the grievous torment. And you are being rewarded for precisely what you had been doing.

28. Only, the special servants of God shall be protected from it.

29. It is these people for whom there shall be sustenance marked.

drinking will be determined according to their wishes, and what is presented to them will be in accordance with their desire and selection. As for the dwellers of Hell, its keepers will throw before them some things whenever they want to and whatever is thrown before them will be the most unfamiliar and the most foul; on the contrary, that which is presented before the dwellers of Paradise will be according to their wish and desire; what is presented will not be unfamiliar to them so that they feel an aversion to them; they will be known and familiar. However, the standard of these things will be something reserved for the dwellers of Paradise. In Sūrah Baqarah, the words are: كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا (٢: ٢٥) (Every time they are fed with their fruit they will say: "Why, this is what we were fed with before." In reality, it will be similar to the previous one. (2:25)). Readers are advised to read my explanation of this verse in order to understand the verse under discussion.

فَوَاكِهُ وَهُم مُّكْرَمُونَ (٤٢) فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٤٣) عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ (٤٤)[30]

The verse states that fruits shall be presented to the dwellers of Paradise and they shall be dealt with in a very honourable way. It has already been stated in verse eighteen that the dwellers of Hell will be humiliatingly in the enclosure of Hell and in verses 62-67 it is stated that they shall be given the tree of *zaqqūm* for eating and boiling water for drinking. On the contrary, the dwellers of Paradise will be given fruits and treated with respect and honour.

The words فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ describe their permanent abode: the will be in gardens of bliss and hence will be able to access all favours and gifts of this place whenever they want and in whatever quantity they want.

The words عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ portray their mutual love and affection: they will sit on thrones while facing one another. It is known that when people have malice and dislike for one another they sit while turning their faces away from one another. Since the hearts of the dwellers of Paradise will be very pure and clean for one another, they will sit while facing one another. Earlier the altercation that will ensue between the dwellers of Paradise has been referred to. These verses, in contrast, portray the circumstances of the dwellers of Paradise.

30. Fruits and they will be in honour in gardens of delight reclining face to face on soft couches.

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِكَأْسٍ مِن مَّعِينٍ (٤٥) بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِّلشَّارِبِينَ (٤٦) بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِّلشَّارِبِينَ (٤٦) لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنزَفُونَ (٤٧)[31]

The word كَأْسٌ occurs in Arabic for both a cup and for the drink it contains. The word مَّعِينٌ means "pure and unadulterated". An example of this meaning occurs in verse thirty of Sūrah Mulk.

The word غَوْلٌ means "to kill someone secretly," and from here it came to be used in the meaning of "a hidden harm."

The word يُنزَفُونَ means "to get tired" and also "to lose one's senses". Here, it is used in both these meanings. The effects of drinking wine not only are intoxication, tiredness and weakness but also losing one's senses. The first of these is a form of physical harm and the second of these is a form of moral misconduct. The wine of Paradise will be devoid of both these defects. The verses mean that cups of pure wine will be passed around for the dwellers of Paradise. This wine will not produce any malice or hatred, will be pure, unadulterated and delightful for those who consume it; it will neither have any hidden harm nor will it make a person lose his senses. In other words, it will have all the qualities of superior wines and it will also be devoid of every ill-effect that the best of wines of this world has.

وَعِندَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ (٤٨) كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ (٤٩)[32]

No pleasure and delight of a person stands complete without women. So after mentioning other pleasures and favours of Paradise houris are mentioned which will be given to men. Readers may have observed that while mentioning the delights of Paradise the Arab taste has been specially kept in consideration because they were the foremost addressees of the Qur'ān. Similarly, the attributes used by the Qur'ān to describe these houris are the ones which classical Arabic poets used for virgin and beautiful women. The actual meaning of the expression قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ is "women who lower their gazes". It signifies their bashfulness and modesty. For the Arabs, the greatest beauty of a woman was her bashfulness.

The word عِينٌ is the plural of أَعْيُنْ and refers to the fact that these

31. For them goblets of pure wine will be in circulation absolutely crystal clear; delightfully delicious to those who drink it; neither will it be harmful nor will they feel tired because of it.

32. And for them will be bashful large-eyed maidens as if they are sheltered eggs of ostriches.

women will be larg-eyes.

The words بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ mean "eggs of an ostrich." In classical Arabic literature, beautiful women are often compared with eggs of an ostrich. Deliberation on this simile shows that it gives due regard to the chastity, protectedness and colour of women. The word مَّكْنُونٌ signifies that they are pure and untouched. It needs to be kept in mind that the Arabs were very sensitive and touchy in protecting their un-married women. It is known that an ostrich may go as far as to sacrifice his life in order to protect its eggs. The simile also denotes that these eggs are golden in colour. Arab poets often mention the golden complexion of beautiful women. The attribute صفراء (yellowish-golden) is very common for them for a beloved. I can present examples from classical Arabic literature to support all that I have said above; however, I want to contain myself from prolonging this explanation.

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٥٠)[33]

From here till verse fifty nine, a dialogue among the dwellers of Paradise is cited which will take place when they will be sitting on thrones in Paradise. Also evident from this dialogue is their extent of happiness for achieving success against combating hindrances for the cause of truth in the previous world. Moreover, this dialogue also reflects the bliss that will engulf them while thinking that they have been forever delivered from death and punishment.

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ (٥١) يَقُولُ أَئِنَّكَ لَمِنْ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ (٥٢) أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ (٥٣) قَالَ هَلْ أَنتُم مُّطَّلِعُونَ (٥٤) فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاء الْجَحِيمِ (٥٥) قَالَ تَاللهِ إِنْ كِدتَّ لَتُرْدِينِ (٥٦) وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ (٥٧) أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ (٥٨) إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُولَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (٥٩)[34]

A person from among the dwellers of Paradise will thus narrate a story

33. Thus they will turn to one another questioning.

34. A speaker from them will say: "I had a friend who used to say: 'Are you among those who believe in the Hereafter – when we are dead and turned to dust and bones, will we be brought to account?'" He will say: "Take a little peep down." So he will look down and see his friend in the very midst of Hell. "By the Lord," he will say to him, "you almost ruined me! But for the grace of God I would have surely have been among the assailed. Is it not a fact that we will never die after our first death neither will we be punished?"

of his past to his associates sitting around him: "I had an acquaintance who would pose a question to me while being wonder-struck. He would ask me if I was also among those who believed in the Hereafter; he would inquire from me if I really believed that when people die and become mud and bones they would be raised to life again."

After that he will utter the words هَلْ أَنتُم مُّطَّلِعُونَ (look what happened to him) to his associates. This style is used in the Arabic language to urge and stir up someone – much like we say: "go find out; take a peep." What he would imply would be: "The day about which that person fought with me has arrived; now find out about that person and his whereabouts."

While uttering the above cited words, he himself will take a peep and will find that person in the centre of Hell, as is evident from the words: فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ. The word سَوَاء means "middle". Evident from these words is the powers of the dwellers of Paradise: while sitting on their thrones they would be able to see anyone they want to however far he may be and also would be able to talk to him.

After that, he will condemn that person for trying almost ruining his fate, as is evident from the words: تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدتَّ لَتُرْدِينِ وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ; it was only God's grace that he was able to protect himself from his onslaught otherwise he too would have been inflicted by the same punishment as him.

After witnessing that person's fate and his own success, he will leap with joy and gleefully declare to his companions: "Have we not been delivered forever from the jaws of death and from the pangs of punishment." In other words, this is the greatest of successes. Deliberation on the style of these verses viz أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُولَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ reveals that their success would be so far beyond their expectations that even after seeing it they would not believe in it and would seek the attestation of their companions.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٦٠) لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلْ الْعَامِلُونَ (٦١)[35]

This is a comment of God on what they said: Real success is the one which will be reaped by those people who lived their lives while keeping in consideration the Hereafter; it is this target to which every person should aspire for. The implication is that even if those who are vehemently after the pleasures and lures of this life achieve some success, then for how long? At last, they have to die and one day rise before God

35. Surely that is supreme success. To this end let every one who tries should try.

to face reward and punishment. So why should they not strive for abiding and eternal success instead of going after transient triumphs.

أَذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ (٦٢) إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظَّالِمِينَ (٦٣) إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ (٦٤) طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُؤُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ (٦٥) فَإِنَّهُمْ لَآكِلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ (٦٦) ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٦٧)[36]

After a mention of the dwellers of Paradise, this is a mention of the humiliation that the dwellers of Hell will suffer. This mention begins by a question: People have heard about the favours and pleasures the companions of Paradise enjoy; they should speak up if this hospitality is better or that of the tree of *zaqqūm* which the companions of Hell will encounter.

The words إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظَّالِمِينَ imply that God has made this tree a means of trial for the wrongdoers. By using this mention of the tree, they made a lot of fun of Hell. This is a reference to the fact that when they were told by the Qur'ān that in Hell they will be given this tree as food, then instead of learning a lesson from this, they started to ridicule it by saying: "What a place is this Hell? It has fire and tree and water in it?" It is then stated that this tree became a trial for them, and by taking its pretence they tried to deny a reality which they will have to face one day.

The verses إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُؤُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ state the fact that these people express wonder that what kind of a tree grows in fire. The fact of the matter is that the nature of this tree is such that it can only grow and nourish in the pit of Hell. The second of these verses portray a very eloquent simile. At times a comparison is made with an imaginative entity but it is more comprehensible to the mind than tangible and observable entities. For example, at times we call a person with an unruly appearance and disheveled hair a ghost. Though a ghost is an imaginative entity yet every person has some concept of a ghost in his mind. Hence the way this comparison will portray such a person seldom will any other comparison match it. In a similar manner, here the leaves and thorns of the tree of *zaqqūm* are likened to heads of devils. It is as if several devils are standing with their heads naked. This comparison is imaginary; yet since a horrible concept of devils is found in the minds,

36. Is this not a better welcome or the *zaqqūm* tree? We have made this tree a trial for the unjust. It is a tree that grows in the innermost part of Hell, bearing fruit like the heads of devils. They shall feed on it, and with it they shall cram their bellies. Then there will be for them a mixture of boiling water.

merely listening to it makes the body shudder.

The verses say that this *zaqqūm* will become the food of the dwellers of Hell and so compelled will they be to consume it that they will fill their bellies with it. Then in order to swallow and digest it, they will be given boiling water to drink.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ (٦٨)[37]

This *zaqqūm* tree will be given to the dwellers of Hell as the first act of their hospitality (*nuzul*) as is evident from verse sixty two earlier. Once they are fed with *zaqqūm* and boiling water, their real abode will be Hell where the results of all their deeds will come before them.

إِنَّهُمْ أَلْفَوْا آبَاءهُمْ ضَالِّينَ (٦٩) فَهُمْ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ (٧٠)[38]

These verses describe the actual reason of their going astray: they did not use their sense and reason and, on the contrary, blindly followed their forefathers. Their forefathers had gone astray, and they selected to follow their ways. When the messengers of God asked them to use their sense and reason, and distinguish good from evil, they arrogantly rejected this call by saying that should they leave their deities at the behest of a mad poet. It is evident from this that blind following is the greatest factor in making a person go astray. In this world, the Almighty is testing the intellect and the intention of people; for this reason, a person who sends his intellect and intention into abeyance will never succeed in this trial.

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٧١) وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِم مُّنذِرِينَ (٧٢) فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (٧٣) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٧٤)[39]

The antecedent of the pronoun in قَبْلَهُمْ is "the Quraysh". From here, the discourse shifts to historical arguments.

It is stated that the way the Quraysh have gone astray, in a similar way many other nations had gone astray earlier and met their fate. This is a reference to the nations which were mentioned in detail in the previous *sūrahs* and which will also be mentioned ahead in this *sūrah*. The verses state that God sent many warners to them from among them to warn

37. Then to Hell shall they return.

38. They found their fathers erring. Then they also ran in their footsteps.

39. And most before them among the ancients also went astray. And We sent Our warners to them. So observe the fate of those who had been warned. Only Our true servants remained protected from this fate.

them of their wrong behaviour but like the Quraysh they too rejected them in their frenzy for blind following their fore-fathers. At last, they suffered the same fate which every nation necessarily does once the truth is conclusively communicated to it. Only those of God's servants were protected from this evil fate whom God's mercy had chosen – the implication is that the Prophet (sws) should rest assured that this fate will also befall these Quraysh; he should continue to do his work with perseverance and consign their matter to God.

Section III: Verses (75-148)

In the succeeding verses, the anecdotes of Abraham (sws), Ishmael (sws), Isaac (sws), Moses (sws), Aaron (sws), Ilyās (sws), Lot (sws) and Jonah (sws) are narrated and at the end of each tale occurs the repetitive motif "God has blessed His Messenger with mercy and peace, strengthened his propagation mission; this is how God rewards His servants who do befitting deeds." It is this motif which, in fact, is the summary of these anecdotes as well.

Till the mention of Aaron (sws) all prophets are cited in the chronological order; after that the sequence is based on the attributes of each prophet; details of this will be found when the verses are explained. In the light of this discussion, readers may now proceed to study the verses.

وَلَقَدْ نَادَانَا نُوحٌ فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ (٧٥) وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٦) وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ (٧٧) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (٧٨) سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٩) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٠) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨١) ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (٨٢) وَإِنَّ مِن شِيعَتِهِ لَإِبْرَاهِيمَ (٨٣) إِذْ جَاء رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٨٤) إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٨٥) أَئِفْكًا آلِهَةً دُونَ اللهِ تُرِيدُونَ (٨٦) فَمَا ظَنُّكُم بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧) فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ (٨٨) فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (٨٩) فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ (٩٠) فَرَاغَ إِلَى آلِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٩١) مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنطِقُونَ (٩٢) فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ (٩٣) فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَزِفُّونَ (٩٤) قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ (٩٥) وَاللهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦) قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُنْيَانًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ (٩٧) فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ

الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٩٨) وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (٩٩) رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠٠) فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (١٠١) فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاء اللهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٠٢) فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (١٠٣) وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (١٠٤) قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٠٥) إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاء الْمُبِينُ (١٠٦) وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٠٧) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٠٨) سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ (١٠٩) كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٠) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١١) وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٢) وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى إِسْحَقَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ (١١٣) وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَى مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١١٤) وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (١١٥) وَنَصَرْنَاهُمْ فَكَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (١١٦) وَآتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ (١١٧) وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١١٨) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١١٩) سَلَامٌ عَلَى مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١٢٠) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢١) إِنَّهُمَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٢٢) وَإِنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنْ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٢٣) إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٢٤) أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ (١٢٥) وَاللهَ رَبَّكُمْ وَرَبَّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٢٦) فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (١٢٧) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٢٨) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٢٩) سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِلْ يَاسِينَ (١٣٠) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٣١) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٢) وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لَّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٣٣) إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٣٤) إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ (١٣٥) ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (١٣٦) وَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِم مُّصْبِحِينَ (١٣٧) وَبِاللَّيْلِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (١٣٨) وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٣٩) إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (١٤٠) فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنْ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (١٤١) فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (١٤٢) فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنْ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ (١٤٣) لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٤٤) فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاء وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (١٤٥) وَأَنبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّن يَقْطِينٍ (١٤٦) وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِئَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (١٤٧) فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ (١٤٨)

And Noah prayed to Us; Thus how gracious are We in listening to prayers! And We delivered him and his people from a mighty scourge and made his descendants the sole survivors. And We left on his way a

group from the later generations: "Peace be to Noah among all people of the world!" Thus do We reward who do deeds in a befitting manner. Indeed, he was one of Our believing servants. Then the others We drowned. (75-82)

And to this group belonged Abraham also, when he came to the presence of his Lord with a pure heart. When he said to his father and to his people: "What are these that you worship? Do you desire false deities instead of God? Then what do you think of the Lord of the Universe?" So he lifted up his eyes to the stars and said: "I am feeling tired." So his people left him and went off. He then stole away to their idols and said to them: "Will you not eat? What is it; you do not speak?" Then he struck them a heavy blow. So people came running to him. He said: "Would you worship that which you have carved with your own hands; It is God who created you and all that you make." They said: "Make a building for him and cast him into the blazing flames." Thus they tried to plot against him: but We abased them all. And he said: "I am going to my Lord; He will guide me. Lord! Grant me a righteous son." So We gave him news of a steadfast son. (83-101)

Thus when he reached the age to walk about with him, he said: "My son! I dream that I am sacrificing you. So consider what you think." He replied: "Father, do as you are being directed. God willing, you shall find me steadfast." Thus when they had both consigned themselves to God, and Abraham had laid down his son prostrate upon his forehead and We called out to him, saying: "Abraham! you have fulfilled your dream." Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly. This indeed was an open trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We left on his ways a group from the later generations. Peace be on Abraham! Thus do We reward those who do deeds in a befitting manner. Indeed, he was one of Our believing servants. And We gave him glad tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous. And We blessed him and Isaac both. And among their offspring are those who do deeds in a befitting manner and others who clearly sin against their souls. (102-113)

And We showed favour to Moses and to Aaron and delivered them and all their people from a mighty calamity. And We helped them; and so they became victorious. And We gave them a Glorious Book and guided them to the straight path. And We left on their ways a group from the later generations. Peace be on Moses and Aaron! Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly. Indeed, both of them were from among Our believing servants. (114-122)

And Ilyās too was from among the messengers when he said to this people: "Have you no fear? Do you invoke Ba'l and forsake the best of

Creators? – God Who is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers." But they rejected him, and will thus be among those seized. Not so God's servants. And We left on their ways a group from the later generations. Peace be on Ilyās and his followers! Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly. Indeed, he was from among Our believing servants. (123-132)

And indeed Lot was also among the messengers when We delivered him and all his kinsfolk, except for an old woman who was among those who stayed behind. Then We destroyed others. And you pass by their settlements morning and evening; so do you not understand? (133-138)

And indeed Jonah was also among the messengers. Recall when he fled to a laden ship. Thus lots were cast and he was pushed away. Thus a fish swallowed him and was blameworthy of rebuke. So had he not been among those who extol the Lord he would have remained in its belly till the Day of Resurrection. We thus placed him on dry land and he was exhausted and caused a creeper tree to grow over him. And We sent him to a nation a hundred thousand strong in fact even more. Thus they professed faith in him; so We let them benefit from pleasures for awhile. (139-148)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ نَادَانَا نُوحٌ فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ (٧٥)[40]

This is a reference to the supplication made by Noah (sws) before his Lord when after a very long time of preaching to his people he had lost hope in they embracing faith. It has been mentioned in verses 117 and 118 of Sūrah Shu'arā' earlier. In Sūrah Nūḥ, his invocation is mentioned in detail. Its last words are as follows:

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا (٧١: ٢٦-٢٧)

And Noah said: "O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land. If You spare them, they will mislead Your servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers." (71:26-27)

This invocation was made by Noah (sws) when he had exhausted all his energy. Hence, his pleading was answered by God forthwith. Thus all except those who professed faith in him were drowned, In Sūrah Nūḥ,

40. And Noah prayed to Us; Thus how gracious are We in listening to prayers!

the fate of these wretched people is stated in the following words:

مِمَّا خَطِيئَاتِهِمْ أُغْرِقُوا فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللهِ أَنصَارًا (٧١: ٢٥)

Because of their misdeeds they were drowned; then were cast into a great Fire. And they found none to help them against Allah. (71:25)

The verse under discussion is meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and his companions; they should bear adverse circumstances with patience; God is not unaware of their supplications and untiring efforts; when the truth is conclusively delivered to his people, he will see how the help of God appears and how his enemies are routed.

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٦) وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ (٧٧)[41]

The verses state that the Almighty protected Noah (sws) and his companions from the great calamity with which all of his people were afflicted. The word أَهْلَ refers to all his family and clan who had embraced faith. Though this word can also refer to the followers of a person, yet it seems that only a few from among the progeny of Noah (sws) professed faith in him, and it was these who remained alive after the deluge and the world was populated through them later. All others were drowned because of their rebelliousness.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (٧٨)[42]

In this sentence, a governing noun (*muḍāf*) and the object of the verb تَرَكْنَا is suppressed as per the linguistic principles of Arabic. If this suppression is accounted for, the whole sentence would be: "We left on his ways a group from among the later generations." This is an allusion to the success of his preaching mission: in spite of the animosity of his enemies, the Almighty made his propagation flourish; amongst the later generations came those who furthered this cause and his enemies were exterminated.

This verse too gives glad tidings to the Prophet (sws) that the Almighty will cause his preaching mission to grow and spread, it will persist in later generations and those who are opposing him today will be routed such that no one will remain to even take their name.

41. And We delivered him and his people from a mighty scourge and made his descendants the sole survivors.

42. And We left on his way a group from the later generations.

سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٩) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٠) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨١) ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (٨٢)[43]

These verses praise and laud Noah (sws) and also give glad tidings to him regarding his success in this world and the next: the status he has achieved in this world was not achieved by anyone before. He stands unrivalled in this regard.

The words إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ declare the fact that this matter is not merely specific to Noah (sws); on the contrary, God always dealt in this way with those who befittingly conducted themselves and in future also He will deal with such people in this manner. This blessing is not specific to a person; it is rather specific to a quality of a person: those who conduct themselves with *iḥsān* will be rewarded in this way by God. The word *iḥsān* has been explained at many places in this exegesis. It means to follow the directives of God with full sincerity.

In the expression إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ the word مُؤْمِن is in its complete meaning. This expression is also meant to praise and laud Noah (sws) and means: he indeed was among those of our people who well and truly believed. The implication is that those who lay claim to faith and take to preaching they should try to follow this exemplary attitude. This is the real requirement of faith. People who in this manner well and truly believe in fact conduct themselves with *iḥsān.* For such people is the blessed status which Noah (sws) was able to acquire.

The verse ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ means that the Almighty sifted out those who had this quality of *iḥsān* in them; the rest were drowned by Him. This is the very purpose of creating this world: God will sift from it those who have this quality in them; the rest will be cast into Hell like waste material.

وَإِنَّ مِن شِيعَتِهِ لَإِبْرَاهِيمَ (٨٣)[44]

After Noah (sws), the most celebrated prophet and messenger of God is Abraham (sws). About the latter it is said that he belongs to the same group and category as Noah (sws). Precisely the same preaching call was given by Abraham (sws) to his nation as the one given by Noah (sws) to

43. "Peace be to Noah among all people of the world!" Thus do We reward who do deeds in a befitting manner. Indeed, he was one of Our believing servants. Then the others We drowned.

44. And to this group belonged Abraham also.

his nation, and both exhibited the same level of faith and sincerity for the cause of God. In verse 78 above it was said that the Almighty left a group of people among the later generations on the way of Noah (sws). The reference here is to Abraham (sws) and his followers. Abraham (sws) preached and followed the way of Noah (sws). It may be kept in mind here that the way of all prophets of God is the same and that is the way of Islam. This issue has already been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

Here it also needs to be kept in consideration that according to the Talmud, Abraham (sws) was instructed and trained by Noah (sws). Though I am not convinced of this; however, if this claim is considered to be true then this can be counted as another aspect which make Abraham (sws) among the group and category of Noah (sws).

إِذْ جَاء رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٨٤)[45]

This verse expresses the total devotion and dedication as well as the perfect and complete sincerity of Abraham (sws) towards God. The expression قَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ refers to a heart which is totally free of the ailments of polytheism and hypocrisy. It is stated in Sūrah Shu'arā': يَوْمَ لَا يَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٢٦: ٨٨-٨٩) (Bear in mind the day whereon neither wealth nor children will avail; only they will succeed who bring forth to God with a clean heart, (26:88-89)). In other words, this verse refers to the fact that neither will there be any ailment of polytheism or hypocrisy in them nor will their allegiance be divided; on the contrary, their hearts will be free from all types of contamination and all their love and obedience will be for One God.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٨٥) أَئِفْكًا آلِهَةً دُونَ اللهِ تُرِيدُونَ (٨٦)[46]

In order to describe Abraham's devotion and utmost sincerity to God and commitment to *tawḥīd*, this verse refers to the call that he gave to his father and nation.

The words مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ signify humiliation and rebuke. In other words, he rebuked them by asking them what kind of baseless things they are worshipping.

The word ئِفْكًا means something which is false and baseless. In other words, the verse actually means: do they falsely and wrongly go after

45. When he came to the presence of his Lord with a pure heart.

46. When he said to his father and to his people: "What are these that you worship? Do you desire false deities instead of God?

other deities besides God?

فَمَا ظَنُّكُم بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧)[47]

This short sentence encompasses very profound meanings. The implication is that if these people are desirous of other deities besides God, then what exactly is their estimation of God? Are they under the false estimation that God alone is powerless to cater for their needs and to protect them? Is He unable to administer this world independently and that is why they are after finding helpers for him? Are they under the false impression that God cannot be aware of every part of this world and of the circumstances of every person and hence in order to make Himself aware of this information He needs the help of other means and sources? Have they lost hope in His justice and mercy so that they have concocted some intercessors who will help them in procuring His justice and mercy? The implication is that unless a person has all these bad estimations about God he can never be as shameful as to tolerate partners with Him. And if a person has such a bad estimation about God, then he should remember that, God forbid, the Almighty is not devoid of honour and self-esteem so that He will put up with the interference of everyone in His Being and kingdom. On the contrary, He is powerful and strong and has a deep sense of honour; thus, He will cast into Hell all those who claim to be His partners in His kingdom or make others His associates.

فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ (٨٨) فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (٨٩) فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ (٩٠) فَرَاغَ إِلَى آلِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٩١) مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنطِقُونَ (٩٢) فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ (٩٣)[48]

It seems that the above referred to speech was made by Abraham (sws) at some eventful occasion in the worship place. After that he made a plan to make evident to his people the baselessness of their idols. The way he adopted for this was that when the event ended at night and people started to leave the place, he cast a glance on the stars as if he wanted to estimate the time and also informed the people that he was feeling tired. People thought that since it was late at night and this young man was tired after a whole day's outing, he did not want to go back to his house

47. Then what do you think of the Lord of the Universe?"

48. So he lifted up his eyes to the stars and said: "I am feeling tired." So his people left him and went off. He then stole away to their idols and said to them: "Will you not eat? What is it; you do not speak?" Then he struck them a heavy blow.

at that time and wanted to spend the night at the place of worship. This was quite a trivial issue; hence they left him and went to their homes. When Abraham (sws) was all alone, he secretly crept to the room where the idols were kept. At first, he made sarcastic remarks before them: why are you not eating the food placed before you? And why are you so silent? Why don't you speak up? After that, he struck them powerfully and smashed them to pieces. At another place in the Qur'ān it is said that he smashed all except the biggest idol. Surah Anbiyā' points out the reason for this.

This is a simple portrayal of the whole incident that is evident from the Qur'ān. However, our exegetes, God knows why, have cited certain narratives while discussing this incident evident from which is that Abraham (sws) had lied on this occasion and was also guilty of believing that the stars had some powers per se.

If Abraham (sws) cast a look at the stars, it was not because he had such a belief; he only wanted to estimate the time. Until watches were invented, people observed the stars at night and the sun in the day to calculate time. Just as today, every person instinctively looks at his watch to find out the time, in olden times they would look up to the sky for this purpose. It was for this very purpose that Abraham (sws) had looked up to the sky. It had nothing to do with superstition of star-worshippers or the powers of stars.

Similarly, his words إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ do not reflect a lie. In the Arabic language, the word سَقِيمٌ refers to "a sick person" as well as "a tired person". If a discourse is not well-knitted, it is also called سَقِيمٌ. In this very *sūrah* ahead, while discussing the Prophet Jonah (sws) it is stated: فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (٣٧: ١٤٥) (We thus placed him on dry land while he was worn out, (37:145)). Obviously, here this word is used to mean "one who is weak and feeble." It is indicated earlier that the occasion was of some festivity in the worship place. On such occasions, every person gets tired and feels weak to some extent. Abraham (sws) felt this as well and since he wanted to spend the night in the worship place he, by glancing at the sky and uttering these words, gave this impression to the guards and keepers that because of tiredness and because of the fact that it was late at night he did not want to go back to his home and wanted to spend the night there. In this manner, though he used double-meaning words to spend the night there as a result of which the guards were led to believe him these words can in no way be considered as a lie or reflecting some evil belief. Such examples of double-meaning words can be seen in the previous pages of this exegesis.

The words فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ portray the response of the guards and those

in charge. They gathered from the style and words of Abraham (sws) that the young man was weary and since it was late at night, he did not want to go home. They regarded this wish to be absolutely harmless; hence they did not interfere in it and leaving him alone went back to their homes.

Consider next the portion فَرَاغَ إِلَى آلِهَتِهِمْ. The verbal noun روغان means to secretly and furtively go to or arrive at some place. It is thus evident from this word that he made his move when he thought that the guards had fallen a sleep. He then secretly crept to the place where the idols were kept.

The words فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنطِقُونَ show that at first he uttered some sarcastic remarks: Why don't you eat these delicious meals and desserts? Why are you so quiet? Why don't you speak up? It is evident from these remarks that at the time when Abraham (sws) made his move he was not worried at all; in fact, he was in a very jolly mood that he has been provided with a very opportune moment to entertain these Gods and that his scheme was successful.

The construction of the sentence فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ is actually فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَضْرِبُهُمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ. Hence, an accurate translation of this verse would be: "He pounced on them to strike them with a mighty blow." The word يَمِين is used for the right hand, and since the blow struck by the right hand is hefty, here it is used to connote a mighty blow.

فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَزِفُّونَ (٩٤)[49]

Here a part of the whole account is suppressed that can understood in the light of what is mentioned in Sūrah Anbiyā'. When Abraham (sws) broke the idols, no one came to know of it at that time. Later, when the guards were informed of the incident, they cast the blame on Abraham (sws). They formed this opinion because they had heard him censure the idols, and had also sounded a warning that he will make a scheme against them. As a result, everyone came running to Abraham (sws) and started investigating him. At first, he made fun of the people and while pointing to the big idol retorted that it is he who must have done all this. At the same time, to make them realize their foolishness asked them to inquire from the idols what has struck them instead of inquiring from him; if they cannot subvert a calamity that struck them nor describe it, then what good are they? This argument by Abraham (sws) initially made them feel embarrassed but later emotional frenzy got the better of them and they replied that how can they ask their idols when Abraham

49. So people came running to him.

knows that they cannot speak. Abraham (sws) then rebuked and admonished them on this confession of theirs. At this, they got angry and conspired to burn Abraham (sws). However, the Almighty did not let them succeed in their evil designs.

قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ (٩٥) وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦)[50]

Abraham (sws) rebuked his people in this manner when he had conclusively delivered the truth to them, as indicated earlier. He cried out to them: O wretched people, you worship idols that you carve out yourselves from wood and stone. God is worshipped because He created all of us; but such is your foolishness that you are worshipping what you have created from your very hands; in other words, you are the creators of your own creator; you should bear in mind that it is God who has created you as well as the wood and stones from which you carve out your idols and He has also created the jinn and angels whose statues you carve out.

Some scholastics have argued that the words وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ refer to the fact that God is also the creator of the deeds and actions of people. This interpretation from the verse is absolutely against the context and occasion. I have explained its true interpretation; hence, no need is left for its refutation.

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُنْيَانًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ (٩٧) فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٩٨)[51]

After this clear opposition by Abraham (sws), those in charge of the worship place took a decision to burn him in fire; however, instead of executing this plan openly, they tried to do it through a secret scheme. This is evident from the words فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا (so they tried to scheme against him). The reason that they went for this covert scheme could be to not let Abraham (sws) escape and it could also be that his family would not cause any impediment in its execution. In tribal societies, tribal support has great significance. Thus it was precisely because of this reason that for a certain period of time the Quraysh were hesitant in openly adopting any aggression against Muḥammad (sws).

It is difficult to answer what actual scheme they adopted against Abraham (sws). There is nothing in the Qur'an and the Torah that can help us in finding a definite answer to this question. What best can be

50. He said: "Would you worship that which you have carved with your own hands; God who created you and all that you make."

51. They said: "Make a building for him and cast him into the blazing flames." Thus they tried to plot against him: but We abased them all.

gathered from the verses is that the priests of the temple schemed to deceptively lure Abraham (sws) to the place where a great fire had been lit up and he be cast into it. From other places of the Qur'ān, it is evident that Abraham (sws) was cast into the fire but God's power and mercy protected him from it and the scheme of his enemies was aborted.

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (٩٩)[52]

After this incident, Abraham (sws) lost hope in his people professing faith and decided to migrate from there. The decision of migration is a very important decision. This is because a prophet has to decide to sever his connection from his environment and enter into a new one – and it cannot be known if this new environment is conducive to him. For this reason in this cause he reposes all his trust and faith in the help and support of God. The word سَيَهْدِينِ reflects his confidence that though he does not know what the future has in store for him but he is hopeful that God will guide him; it is his promise that those who strive in His cause are guided by Him.

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠٠)[53]

Once a person severs his relationship with his relatives, family and tribe his greatest need is good companions. Thus, while migrating, Abraham (sws) prayed to God to grant him good companions in place of these evil ones. In my opinion, this prayer of Abraham (sws) does not merely relate to righteous offspring; it also relates to good companions and supporters. Pious offspring are the foremost companions among such a group.

فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (١٠١)[54]

The Almighty accepted this prayer and gave him glad tidings of a son. It is quite obvious that the son referred to here is Ishmael (sws). Some of the reasons for this inference are very evident:

Firstly, he was the sole child of Abraham (sws) for which he prayed to God. Regarding Isaac (sws) I have already explained at an appropriate place that Abraham (sws) never prayed for him; he was granted to him as a reward for Ishmael's sacrifice.

Secondly, the succeeding verses mention his sacrifice and Abraham

52. And he said: "I am going to my Lord; He will guide me.
53. Lord! Grant me a righteous son."
54. So We gave him news of a steadfast son.

(sws) sacrificed him and not Isaac (sws). The interpolations made by the Jews in this incident have been exposed by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his book: *Fī man huwa al-dhabīh* (Which of Abraham's son was Sacrificed?) Those interested can consult this book.

Thirdly, the verse mentions the word حَلِيمٌ as a quality of this son. This quality signifies his steadfastness and fortitude that he showed before the knife of his father. It was a result of this behaviour that the Almighty conferred the titles of صَادِقُ الوَعْد (true to his promises) and صَابِرٌ (patient) and حَلِيمٌ (steadfast) upon him.

It may also be noted that the Qur'ān mentions precisely the same quality of حَلِيمٌ for Abraham (sws). It is evident from this that Ishmael (sws) was the most prominent manifestation of his father's qualities.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاء اللهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٠٢)[55]

The word سَعْي refers to the age in which a child starts to run and walk about. The verse states that when the son entered the age of walking and running about his father, a dream was seen by his father. In this dream, he saw that God was directing him to sacrifice his son for Him. It has been indicated earlier that Abraham (sws) was rewarded with Ishmael (sws) as a result of his prayer at the time when he had migrated from his family and people to another country. The only thing that was a means of assurance to him in this alien land was this sole son. Till that time, his son was in the age of walking about his father and helping him in his chores. It is evident from the Torah that at that time he was thirteen years old. Every one can see that at this age a son is loved the most by his father. Readers can see how tough a trial this was. However, no person can be truly perfect in his faithfulness to God unless he is ready to prepare to sacrifice the most beloved thing for God's cause. For this reason, Abraham (sws) was put through this trial. Though this directive was given to him in a dream and what is said in a dream needs to be interpreted and if Abraham (sws) wanted he could have interpreted this dream, yet this true and sincere person instead of interpreting the dream embarked upon obeying exactly what he was shown.

The words قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى show that the

55. Thus when he reached the age to walk about with him, he said: "My son! I dream that I am sacrificing you. So consider what you think." He replied: "Father, do as you are being directed. God willing, you shall find me steadfast."

first step that he took in this regard was to assess the courage of his son. He informed him that he was seeing a dream in which he was slaughtering him; he further asked him of his opinion on this dream. It is evident from the style of the verse that Abraham (sws) saw this dream more than once. Had he seen it just once the words رَأَيْتُ فِي الْمَنَامِ were more appropriate. Abraham (sws) also explained that though he saw this dream more than once, yet it was still a dream so that the whole matter is evident to Ishmael (sws). It seems that he had full faith in Ishmael's intellect and understanding. He was hopeful that his intellect will help him reach the right the decision in this regard.

It is evident from the words قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاء اللهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ that Ishmael (sws) understood this dream to be a directive of God and not a mere vision and replied forthwith that his father should obey it without any hesitation and rest assured that he himself was ready for it; his father will find him fully steadfast.

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (١٠٣)[56]

This verse depicts the actual act of sacrifice. The word أَسْلَمَ means to submit oneself to God. In other words, both the father and the son got ready for the test. The father took out a knife to slaughter his son and the son submitted himself for sacrifice. The words imply that the father prostrated his son before him on his forehead. Some people are of the opinion that Abraham (sws) took this measure to avoid eye-contact with his beloved son while slaughtering so that any feeling of sympathy may not impede the process. Yet in my opinion this interpretation is not correct. A father who is prepared to slaughter his sole and beloved son does not need such assurances. In my opinion, the reason for this was that he wanted to sacrifice his son while the latter was in the state of prostration; for this reason, he laid him on his forehead. The posture of prostration is the most likeable in Islam viz a viz proximity to God. At another place, the words used are: وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (٩٦: ١٩) (bow down in prostration and draw near your Lord, (96:19)). This status of the posture of prostration is acknowledged by earlier religions as well. It may be noted that this incident happened when the House of God had not been built and there was no prescribed direction for praying. Had there been a prescribed direction, Abraham (sws) may have prostrated his son towards it the way we do so when we sacrifice animals.

56. Thus when they had both consigned themselves to God, and Abraham had laid down his son prostrate upon his forehead.

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (١٠٤) قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٠٥)[57]

As Abraham (sws) was about to slaughter Ishmael (sws), the Almighty called out to him and said that he had made his dream come true and the success he has achieved in this trial is a reward of his befitting behaviour and sincere attitude. It is in this manner that the Almighty grants success to such servants of His in various trials.

It has been indicated earlier that whatever is shown in a dream requires interpretation. The purpose of this dream shown to Abraham (sws) was to ask him to dedicate his son to the service of God; the purpose was not that he actually slaughters him. Thus when he got prepared to sacrifice his son, the real purpose of the dream was fulfilled. So the Almighty gave him the glad tidings that the purpose of the dream has been fulfilled; nothing further is required. People who have inferred from this that the Almighty abrogated His own directive before it was carried out have gone to uncalled for limits. In the wake of the correct interpretation of the verse, refutation of this view is not needed.

It is evident from the words كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ that people who try to fulfill all the directives of God in a befitting manner and in a way that they should be really fulfilled are bestowed with big success by Him in great trials and also the eternal kingdom of Paradise as a reward. On the other hand, people who adopt an escapist policy towards religion gradually lose the ability to face the trials of God. The result of this is that the doors of success in the Hereafter are closed to them.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاء الْمُبِينُ (١٠٦)[58]

The Almighty has praised Abraham (sws) in this verse for his success: the trial was not trivial; it was a great one. Abraham (sws) came out of it in flying colours. A trial which is regarded to be great by the Almighty Himself is undoubtedly great. And if Abraham (sws) succeeded in this trial in such a manner that God Himself lauded him by the majestic words قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا (you have fulfilled your dream), then there can be no doubt about the fact that no greater a trial ever took place on this earth and no greater a success was achieved by anyone than Abraham (sws).

57. And We called out to him, saying: "Abraham! You have fulfilled your dream." Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly.

58. This indeed was an open trial.

وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٠٧)[59]

The verse states: We ransomed Ishmael (sws) through a great sacrifice. This is a reference to the fact that the Almighty directed Abraham (sws) to slaughter a ram in place of his son and this act of slaughter will be commemorated as a great sacrifice offered by all generations to come. It is this sacrifice which by being included in the rituals of *ḥajj* is being continuously offered from the times of Abraham (sws) till today and will continue to be offered till the Day of Judgement. Here, it may be kept in mind that though the ritual of animal sacrifice is found in all ancient religions starting from Adam (sws), yet no sacrifice has assumed such significant and universal status as this Abrahamic sacrifice.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٠٨)[60]

This is a repetitive verse. Previously it occurred at the end of Noah's anecdote. It has been explained that amongst earlier generations the Almighty kept a group steadfast on the teachings of Abraham (sws). In Sūrah Shu'arā the following prayer of Abraham (sws) was mentioned: وَاجْعَل لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (٢٦: ٨٤) (Lord! Grant me an abiding remembrance among later generations, (26:84)). The Almighty accepted this prayer and granted him eternal fame that stands unparalleled in history.

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (١٠٩)[61]

This is an independent sentence: may peace and blessings be on Abraham (sws) in this world and in the next for his truthfulness and sincerity. The word سَلَامٌ is not defined by the article ال to express its majesty.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٠)[62]

The word كَذَٰلِكَ (in this manner) points to the peace and blessings mentioned in the previous verse. The verse states that the Almighty in this manner confers peace and blessings to His servants who are sincere and act in a befitting manner.

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59. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.
60. And We left on his ways a group from the later generations.
61. Peace be on Abraham!
62. Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١١)[63]

The word مُؤْمِنِينَ is in its complete meaning. Thus the verse would mean: "Indeed Abraham was from among our thorough believers." Evident from this is the essence of faith: it is one which has the spirit of sincerity and thoroughness in it – one whose example was presented by Abraham (sws). Not every faith to which a person lays claim to is worthy in the eyes of God.

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٢)[64]

As reward for success in this trial, the Almighty gave Abraham (sws) the glad tidings of his second son – Isaac (sws). While giving these glad tidings to him, the Almighty also stated that the son would be from among the righteous and that He will confer the status of prophethood on him. The reason that these traits of a new son were mentioned with his glad tidings was that the mere birth of another son was of no significance to Abraham (sws). After Ishmael (sws) his thirst for a child had been quenched. Thus it is evident from the Torah that when he was given the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac (sws), he is reported to have said: "I wish only Ishmael continues to live in your presence." However, what could really constitute glad tidings for him was the mention of a son who would not only be righteous but also be a prophet of God.

It is evident from this discussion that the story concocted by the Jews that it was Isaac (sws) who was offered for sacrifice by Abraham (sws) is totally baseless. He was born after the incident of sacrifice. He was not the one offered for sacrifice; rather he was the son who was given to Abraham (sws) as reward for offering a sacrifice.

وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى إِسْحَقَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ (١١٣)[65]

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in عَلَيْهِ is Ishmael (sws). Those who regard this antecedent to be Abraham (sws) have grossly erred in their interpretation. Has this been the case, then the word ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا (the progeny of both) should have been: ذُرِّيَّتِهِ (his progeny). This is because

63. Indeed, He was one of Our believing servants.

64. And We gave him glad tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous.

65. And We blessed him and Isaac both. And among their offspring are those who do deeds in a befitting manner and others who clearly sinned against their souls.

Isaac (sws) is not parallel to Abraham (sws) but from among his progeny.

The verse states that the Almighty blessed both Ishmael (sws) and Isaac (sws). The progeny of both prospered and multiplied. Among their progeny, some are righteous and sincere believers like their fathers and some while totally deviating from their path are inflicted with polytheism and disbelief and in this manner have become among those who openly wrong their souls. It is as if both the Ishmaelites and the Israelites are reminded at a very opportune time of their great ancestors and of the way they should adopt and of the way they have actually deviated to.

Here a grammatical question does arise: What began with the conditional clause فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (Thus when they had both consigned themselves to God) is continuing till this verse; so what is the answer to the conditional particle needs to: لَمَّا (when)? It has been explained many times in this exegesis that at times the answer to conditional clauses like this is suppressed and the intensity of the tone of the speaker is reflected by this suppression. This suppression is employed at instances where such is the nature of the answer that words are unable to express their intensity. A clear example of this is coming up in Sūrah Zumar: وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٣٩: ٧٣) (And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near it and its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say to them: “Peace be to you! Be happy; enter it forever.” (39: 73)) It can be seen that in this verse too the answer to the conditional statement: Until when they draw near it … is suppressed. This suppression is evident from the intensity of the discourse. Similar is the case with the verse under discussion. Words are unable to express the intensity of the suppressed part. However, the suppression is self-evident: when the father and the son in order to please the Almighty took this step, one should imagine how many great blessings of God they became worthy of.

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَى مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١١٤) وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (١١٥) وَنَصَرْنَاهُمْ فَكَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (١١٦)[66]

The most celebrated of messengers of God after Abraham (sws) were Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) who became the pioneers of a great

66. And We showed favour to Moses and to Aaron and delivered them and all their people from a mighty calamity. And We helped them; so they became victorious.

ummah after defeating a powerful enemy and the *sharī'ah* which they brought reigned over a large area for a long period of time. It is stated that the Almighty blessed Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) with the guidance of the *sharī'ah* and delivered them and their people: the Israelites from a huge burden – slavery of the Pharaoh and helped them. As a result, they triumphed. The word نَصَرْنَاهُمْ points to the triumphs notched up by the Israelites as a nation when they migrated from Egypt.

وَآتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ (١١٧) وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١١٨)[67]

The expressions الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ and الْكِتَابَ الْمُبِينَ have the same meaning. They refer to the Torah. Before it, the Almighty never gave the *sharī'ah* to any *ummah* in the form of a clear book. People were taught orally. The Torah has the distinction of being composed of the *sharī'ah* in the form of an arranged and clear book.

Though the Torah was formally only revealed to Moses (sws), yet since Aaron (sws) was made a co-messenger with him the verse ascribes the Torah to Aaron (sws) as well. About both of them, it is stated that the Almighty guided them to the straight path. This mention also secondarily refutes the blames cast by the Jews on Aaron (sws) and which have been referred to at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١١٩) سَلَامٌ عَلَى مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١٢٠) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢١) إِنَّهُمَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٢٢)[68]

The above verses are repetitive and thus occur earlier as well where every part has been fully explained. The implication is that after these two messengers, people continued to follow their ways; God sent His mercy and blessings on them and their enemies were humiliated; it is in this manner that the Almighty rewards those of His servants who are sincere and befittingly practice religion. In other words, even if today there are such people, they too will be entitled to God's mercy and blessings and God will grant permanence to their ways. Moreover, bearers of their message will be born and their name will shine in the annals of history.

Till these verses, celebrated prophets of God and their achievements

67. And We gave them a Glorious Book and guided them to the straight path.

68. And We left on their ways a group from the later generations. Peace be on Moses and Aaron! Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly. Indeed, both of them were from among Our believing servants.

have been mentioned, and they were mentioned in a chronological sequence. In the succeeding verses, the prophets Ilyās (sws), Lot (sws) and Jonah (sws) are briefly mentioned.

The Prophet Ilyās is called Elijah in the Torah and he lived around 789 BC. In verse 85 of Sūrah An'ām, his name is mentioned along with Zakariyyā (sws), John the Baptist (sws) and Jonah (sws). It is evident from this that he had the same attributes as these prophets. Some people think that Ilyās (sws) is actually Idrīs (sws); however, this view is not correct. Idrīs (sws) is mentioned in the Qur'ān by his own name.

Lot (sws) is a relative of Abraham (sws) and was trained and instructed by him. Both belong to the same era.

Jonah (sws) is mentioned in detail in Sūrah Yūnus and Sūrah Anbiyā'. Overwhelmed by his sense of honour for the truth, he migrated from his people before he was granted permission by God; at this, he was punished and he went back to his people. After that, he called upon them to embrace faith which all of them did.

The purpose of mentioning these prophets is the same for which prophets prior to them were mentioned. Though these prophets were not able to acquire the same might and power as Noah (sws), Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws) and they had to work in an alien environment yet God furthered their work as well and after them their preaching and their practices continued to survive. The importance of Jonah (sws) being mentioned in the end is meant to convey a special message: hastiness for the cause of disseminating the truth even if it is caused by one's sense of honour for the truth is not allowed to a prophet; he should keep doing his work with patience and perseverance. It is only God Who knows when a nation has become bereft of the potential to accept faith and no further time should be granted to it.

وَإِنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنْ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٢٣) إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٢٤) أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ (١٢٥) وَاللهَ رَبَّكُمْ وَرَبَّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٢٦)[69]

Ba'l is the name of the deity worshipped by the people of Ilyās. It seems quite probable that the city of Ba'balak was named after it because bak is the shortened form of Bakkah which means "city". Ilyās called to him people thus: "O Wretched people! While leaving aside Allah, the Best of Creators Who is your Lord and of your forefathers, you worship

69. And Ilyās too was from among the messengers when he said to this people: "Have you no fear? Do you invoke Ba'l and forsake the best of Creators? – God Who is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers."

Ba'l." The expression shows that not only is God their creator; He is the best of Creators; He created them and blessed them with all abilities of head and heart; it is He alone Who is nourishing them; He is their Lord and of all their ancestors; so what is the reason of leaving him and worshipping Ba'l? Does he have a role in creating and nourishing them?

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (١٢٧) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٢٨)[70]

The verse states that his people rejected him as a result of which all of these rejecters will be presented before God as sinners. Only those will not suffer this fate who the Almighty chose for His worship, and those who professed faith in Ilyās (sws).

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٢٩)[71]

This is the repetitive verse which occurs after every prophetic anecdote. The implication is that those who opposed Ilyās (sws) were forgotten by posterity but God made their name and message live on.

سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِلْ يَاسِينَ (١٣٠) إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٣١) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٢)[72]

The word إِلْ يَاسِينَ is the plural of إِلْيَاس and refers to all their progeny and followers. In the Arabic language, such plurals refer to all components and corollaries of the noun they signify. The Qur'ān has used the plural طُوْرسِيْنِيْن of the word طُوْر on similar lines. Evident from this is that the blessings and mercy received by a prophet also extend to his true followers.

The verse إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ has already been explained. Its repetitive occurrence is meant to point to the fact that it refers to an established practice of God. God makes the name of such people endure who display such faith and virtuosity, and those who oppose such people are forgotten by later generations.

وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لَّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٣٣) إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٣٤) إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ (١٣٥) ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (١٣٦) وَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِم مُّصْبِحِينَ (١٣٧) وَبِاللَّيْلِ أَفَلَا

70. But they rejected him, and will thus be among those seized. Not so God's servants.

71. And We left on their ways a group from the later generations.

72. Peace be on Ilyās and his followers! Thus do We reward those who do deeds befittingly. Indeed, he was from among Our believing servants.

تَعْقِلُونَ (١٣٨)[73]

This is a reference to the account of Lot (sws) and his people. It is stated that he too was from among the messengers of God; his people also denied him as a result of which the Almighty delivered him and all his relatives who professed faith in him from torment, and all the rest were destroyed. One of his family was his old wife who was among those who were left behind with his nation because she had deprived herself of faith; so she was destroyed with the rest. This is because merely being a relative of a prophet is of no avail; what is of avail is faith and righteous deeds.

At the end of this section, instead of the repetitive verses which occur after the accounts of all the previously mentioned prophets, the Quraysh are addressed and told that since they continue to pass by the settlements of the people of Lot (sws) day and night in their trade journeys, why don't they contemplate that why would the established practice of God change for them – the established practice of destroying those who deny their respective messenger. In other words, since the repetitive verses were self-evident here they were suppressed and an apt admonition was sounded to the addressees of the *sūrah*. An occasion for this very appropriate warning arose with the mention of the settlements of the people of Lot (sws) by which the Quraysh frequently passed by.

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٣٩) إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (١٤٠)[74]

The account of Jonah (sws) has already been mentioned in Sūrah Yūnus, Sūrah Anbiyā' and some other *sūrahs*. At an appropriate place of this exegesis, I have already pointed out in detail how the narrators of the Torah have messed up this account. Jonah (sws) was sent to the people of Nineveh. When his people did not give due consideration to his preaching, his passionate sense of honour for the truth made him leave them; he embarked on a ship that was ready to set sail for some destination. During the journey, the ship was caught in a storm. As per their tradition, the ship travelers decided that some person has embarked on it who is a sinner and unless he is off loaded from it into the sea the

73. And indeed Lot was also among the messengers when We delivered him and all his kinsfolk, except for an old woman who was among those who stayed behind. Then We destroyed others. And you pass by their settlements morning and evening; so do you not understand?

74. And indeed Jonah was also among the messengers. Recall when he fled to a laden ship.

ship will not be able to come out of this storm. At last, it was decided that lots will be cast to find out who that criminal was. The lots fell on Jonah (sws) and he was thrown into the sea. Here, probably a shark swallowed him but God saved him because he realized his folly and extolled the Almighty. The shark spitted him out on a sandy shore. There in order to save him from the extreme heat of the sun, the Almighty caused a gourd creeper to grow. Its shade protected him in this state of weakness. At last, when he fully recovered, the Almighty once again asked him to go back to his people and to preach his message to them. This time all the inhabitants of Nineveh – numbering almost one hundred and fifty thousand – accepted faith.

This account is narrated to the Prophet (sws) and his companions so that they do not get disappointed at the attitude of their people and continue with their preaching. A prophet is deployed by the Almighty at a frontier where good and evil forces are engaged in a conflict; for this reason, he is not allowed to leave that frontier without the permission of God even because of a pious motive. The trials ordained by the Almighty for a prophet have to be endured by him. If he is worried because of one trial it is possible that while trying to save himself from it he ends up facing a greater trial. Similarly, the respite needed by a nation in which the truth is conclusively communicated to it is also essential, as per the established practice of God in this regard. Moreover, it is only God who knows when this has been done. Jonah (sws) out of his own estimation decided that the people of Nineveh will not accept faith even though later events showed that the whole nation had the potential to do so.

The word أَبَقَ in إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ refers to the incident when Jonah (sws) had left his people for some other destination. Prophets of God never falter because of being overcome with base desires; however, because of their passion to follow the truth at times they exceed limits. Though this attitude is not wrong in itself; in fact, is commendable, however, since prophets of God are a barometer of the truth, so if they show some imbalance in any way even with this pious motive they are checked by the Almighty. A similar blemish emanated from Jonah (sws). When their people did not duly value his preaching, he felt offended and left them thinking that why should he cast pearls before such people. It seems that as soon as he made this decision, he found a ship laden with goods ready to set sail for some destination. The word مَشْحُونِ means "ship laden with goods." The purpose of using this word is to show that being disappointed from his people he wanted to leave them and as per his wish he even found a ship ready to go to someplace and he immediately embarked on it. He did not get the chance to fully reflect on

the whole issue.

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنْ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (١٤١)[75]

As per the tradition to which I have referred to earlier when the time came to cast lots the inhabitants of the ship chose Jonah (sws) for the task. The reason for this probably was that he would have been regarded as the most respectable and dignified person on the ship and the responsibility of casting lots was deemed appropriate for such a person; however, ironically the lot fell on Jonah (sws) himself and as per this divine decree he was pushed away from the ship. It may be kept in mind that the expression عبد أبق is used for a slave who has run away from a chore assigned to him by his master. It was as if Jonah (sws) was regarded as a run-away slave, and as a punishment for this crime was cast into the sea by the ship's inhabitants.

فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (١٤٢)[76]

The word حُوت signifies a large fish. A sea has large fish like sharks and whales which can swallow a complete human being. Such a fish must have swallowed Jonah (sws). The words وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ mean that he deserved this calamity which he faced because he had done something on which the Almighty deemed him worthy of admonition. I have already indicated earlier that Jonah (sws) was driven by a pious motive in what he did; however, since he did this without God's permission he was chastised by God and such accountability is always commensurate to one's status; hence, it was quite stern.

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنْ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ (١٤٣) لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٤٤)[77]

The nature of *tasbīḥ* referred to by the word مُسَبِّحِينَ has already been explained at another place in this exegesis: it refers to chanting of the words: لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢١: ٨٧). These are the best of words which express confession of a sin and seeking of forgiveness from God. Jonah (sws) chanted it and as a result was delivered from his predicament. It seems that as soon as this calamity struck Jonah (sws) it became evident to him that he had been punished by the Almighty and

75. Thus lots were cast and he was pushed away.

76. Thus a fish swallowed him and was blameworthy of rebuke.

77. So had he not been among those who extol the Lord he would have remained in its belly till the Day of Resurrection.

he turned to God with all his heart. The Almighty has informed us that it was the majesty of the words that he uttered which saved him otherwise he would have been overtaken by death in the belly of the fish which swallowed him.

فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاء وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (١٤٥) وَأَنبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّن يَقْطِينٍ (١٤٦)[78]

Finally, at the behest of the Almighty, the fish threw him up on a sandy shore; obviously, at that time he must have been very tired and weak. However, God made a gourd creeper grow above him which protected him on the sea shore from the heat of the sun and after some time he regained his calm.

وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِئَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (١٤٧) فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ (١٤٨)[79]

Once he regained his calm, the Almighty once again sent him to his people to preach to them. This time all of them accepted faith and God delivered them from His punishment and let them enjoy the pleasures of life till an appointed time. The word أَوْ (or) also means بَلْ (in fact). It is evident from the Torah that those who professed faith were one hundred and fifty thousand.

Section V: Verses (149-182)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. It ends on the topic it began with. As pointed out many times before, this style of the Qur'ān can be seen in numerous *sūrahs.*

This *sūrah* began with a refutation of the divinity of the angels and of the angels having knowledge of the unseen world (*ghayb*). After that anecdotes of various prophets were narrated to warn the Quraysh. Evident from these accounts is that all the prophets preached the same religion as is being preached to them today. It is also indicated that those who denied their respective messengers were destroyed. God blessed His messengers and their companions. Their name and mission prospered and earned respect in this world and in the next one also they will be given an eternal

78. We thus placed him on dry land and he was exhausted and caused a creeper tree to grow over him.

79. And We sent him to a nation a hundred thousand strong, in fact even more. Thus they professed faith in him; so We let them benefit from pleasures for awhile.

kingdom. It is this topic which occurs here at the end of the *sūrah* in a new style. First, the Idolaters of the Qurasyh are challenged that if they have any logical argument for worshipping angels by regarding them to be daughters of God and for setting up a connection between God and the jinn, then they should come forth with it; otherwise, they should fear God. After that, the real status of the angels is explained through the tongue of Gabriel. This is done to inform these people on their foolishness. They are told by the greatest person among angels what status and position they actually have which is quite contrary to the one those who worship them think. At the end, glad tidings are given to the Prophet (sws) that the promise of divine help for God's messengers will be fulfilled in His case as well; so he should continue doing his work with patience; his addressees will soon meet their fate.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ (١٤٩) أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ (١٥٠) أَلَا إِنَّهُم مِّنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ (١٥١) وَلَدَ اللهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٥٢) أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ (١٥٣) مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (١٥٤) أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (١٥٥) أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥٦) فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٥٧) وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (١٥٨) سُبْحَانَ اللهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٥٩) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٦٠) فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ (١٦١) مَا أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَاتِنِينَ (١٦٢) إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالِ الْجَحِيمِ (١٦٣) وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (١٦٤) وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ (١٦٥) وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (١٦٦) وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ (١٦٧) لَوْ أَنَّ عِندَنَا ذِكْرًا مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٦٨) لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٦٩) فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٧٠) وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٧١) إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنصُورُونَ (١٧٢) وَإِنَّ جُندَنَا لَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ (١٧٣) فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (١٧٤) وَأَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧٥) أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (١٧٦) فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاء صَبَاحُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (١٧٧) وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (١٧٨) وَأَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧٩) سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٨٠) وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٨١) وَالْحَمْدُ لِلهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٨٢)

So ask them: "Are there daughters for your Lord while there are sons for themselves? Did We create the angels as women whilst they were

seeing?" Beware, these people are falsely saying that God has children and these people are absolute liars. Has he preferred daughters over sons? What has come over you? How do you judge so ill? Do you not take heed? Have you a clear proof? Bring forth your book if what you say be true! (149-157)

And they have also set up a relationship between God and the jinn. And the jinn well know that they will be punished. Exalted is God above their imputations! Not so God's special servants. Thus neither you nor those who you worship can lead astray any but those who are set to enter Hell. (158-163)

And for each of us is an appointed place and We stand arrayed before God. And We glorify Him. (164-166)

And indeed these people used to say: "Had we any teaching of the earlier generations we would have been among God's chosen servants." So they rejected it; so they shall soon come to know. (167-170)

And for our special servants sent as messengers this decision of Ours has been already delivered that they are the ones who shall be worthy of help and that Our army only is set to be victorious. So pay no heed to them awhile, and observe them; they shall also soon observe. (171-175)

Do they want to hasten Our punishment? They should remember that when it descends upon them in their courtyards, evil will be the morning of those who have been forewarned. So pay no heed to them awhile, and observe them; they shall also soon observe. (176-179)

Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of Glory, above their imputations! And peace be on the messengers and God alone is worthy of gratitude, Lord of the universe! (180-182)

Explanation

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ (١٤٩)[80]

This last section of the *sūrah*, as referred to earlier is linked to the topic discussed at the beginning of the *sūrah*. Though these two parts of the *sūrah* seemed to be far distanced from one another, this distance is only apparent in nature. In reality, the discourse is totally coherent. In the beginning of the *sūrah* after a refutation of the divinity of the angels and the jinn it is with this very word فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ the discourse from verse eleven onwards digressed to threaten and admonish the Quraysh and to assure the Prophet (sws). This topic continued all through till now. Once it ended, the same word فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ was mentioned again to link it to its

80. So ask them: "Are there daughters for your Lord while there are sons for themselves?

previous occurrence and the same topic is taken up. It is said that the Prophet (sws) should inquire from those who worship these angels by regarding them to be daughters of God that if they choose sons for themselves, why do choose daughters for their Lord. The implication is that in the first place imputing sons and daughters to God is extreme ignorance but they displayed even more ignorance by choosing for God something which they would never choose for themselves. It is the requisite of human intellect and nature that they should have ascribed to God the traits that He is worthy of. They committed the cardinal sin of not only attributing to God which was not befitting for Him they ended up ascribing a feature to him which they themselves regarded to be shameful for their own selves.

أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ (١٥٠)[81]

The verse implies that what is the argument on the basis of which they confidently claim that angels are the daughters of God? Did they witness the creation of angels by God? In Sūrah Zukhruf, it is similarly said: وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنَاثًا أَشَهِدُوا خَلْقَهُمْ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْأَلُونَ (٤٣: ١٩) (And they regard the angels who are the servants of the Most Gracious to be women. Were they present at their birth? This testimony of theirs has been noted, and they shall be questioned. (43:19))

أَلَا إِنَّهُم مِّنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ (١٥١) وَلَدَ اللهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٥٢)[82]

The verse refers to the fact that these people neither have an intellectual argument nor any scriptural support to back their claim. They have also no visual proof. They are merely concocting that God has children. It is then asserted that these people are absolute liars.

أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ (١٥٣) مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (١٥٤) أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (١٥٥)[83]

The implication of these verses is that if the Almighty was fond of having children, why would he prefer daughters to sons? If He was also capable of producing sons why did He tolerate something which the Idolaters were not ready to put up with unless compelled to.

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81. Did We create the angels as women whilst they were seeing?"

82. Beware, these people are falsely saying that God has children and these people are absolute liars.

83. Has he preferred daughters over sons? What has come over you? How do you judge so ill? Do you not take heed?

The words مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ imply that what has gone wrong with their intellect that they make such a firm and inalterable decision.

The words أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ refer to the fact that this attitude of theirs bears witness that they are people who have lost their sense of reason otherwise why would they have chosen something for God which they are not prepared to choose for themselves. In other words, this thing is not something which even requires any reasoning; it only requires paying slight heed (تَذَكُّر) to grasp it. A person can very easily come to know of this unless he is extremely foolish and heedless.

أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥٦) فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٥٧)[84]

The verse asks the disbelievers to present clear evidence if they have it. The expression "clear evidence" has been specified by the verse as "a book." In other words, if they can back their claim with a testimony from a divine scripture, they should present it. No one has the right to concoct anything about God. He can only say something in this regard if he has a clear argument in its favour. And the clearest of such arguments is His Book which He has revealed for the guidance of His people.

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (١٥٨) سُبْحَانَ اللهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٥٩) إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٦٠)[85]

The verse سُبْحَانَ اللهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ is a parenthetical sentence and the verse وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ is actually linked to إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ. Several instances occur in the Qur'ān when something has to be negated forthwith, then such a negation is inserted in the discourse. This is meant to show that a certain thing is so evil and horrific that the speaker is not even ready to wait for the sentence to be completed.

The verses mean that not only were these people imprudent enough to regard angels to be daughters of God but they went as far in their foolishness as to establish a link between God and the jinn: they made the angels as partners in the being of God and made the jinn partners in the rights and attributes of God. God alone is worthy of being worshipped but these wretched people regard the jinn to have the authority to harm and benefit people and to be a means of finding out the

84. Have you a clear proof? Bring forth your book if what you say be true!

85. And they have also set up a relationship between God and the jinn. And the jinn well know that they will be punished. Exalted is God above their imputations! Not so God's special servants.

matters of the unseen world (*ghayb*), and on the basis of this false notion worship them and present sacrifices and vows before them.

The words وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ signify that the jinn themselves are fully convinced that they are creatures of God and they shall one day be held accountable before Him; the sinners among them will be punished for their evil deeds; however, these foolish people have made them partners of God and started to worship them.

The linking of the jinn to God was something so detestable that it needed an immediate rebuttal. The words سُبْحَانَ اللهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ thus occur right after and say that the exalted person of God is above all such ascriptions; neither is anyone a partner in His being nor His attributes. He is one and alone in His being and attributes; for this reason, the rights He has only belong to Him.

The words إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ. Since إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ are an exception to the word مُحْضَرُونَ means that all the jinn will be arrested like criminals and brought before God the exception is meant to explain that only those will be saved from this arrest whom the Almighty according to His established practice guides to the right path because they are worthy of being guided and are thus protected from the lures of Satan.

It beats me what led Zamakasharī[86] to conclude that the jinn referred to here are angels. I have presented the true interpretation of the verses and hence a refutation of his view is not needed. The Qur'ān mentions angels and jinn as two distinct creations having different traits from one another. There is no possibility of regarding them to be one. What at best can be said is that the jinn are closer with regard to their substance of creation to the angels than human beings. This is because the jinn have been created from fire, the angels from light and human beings from clay.

فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ (١٦١) مَا أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَاتِنِينَ (١٦٢) إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالِ الْجَحِيمِ (١٦٣)[87]

In the expression عَلَيْهِ بِفَاتِنِينَ some exegetes[88] have interpreted the word عَلَيْ to means "against" and the antecedent of the pronoun to be God. I am not fully convinced of this interpretation; yet if it is accepted it would mean that in these verses those who worship the jinn are informed that they and the jinn can lure only those people who because of their misdeeds are destined to enter Hell. In other words, what the Almighty had said in

86. See: al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 66.

87. Thus neither you nor those who you worship can lead astray any but those who are set to enter Hell.

88. See, for example: al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 67.

response to the challenge thrown by Satan is stated here in a different style. The Almighty had said that Satan will only be able to lead astray those who follow him; he will not be able to influence people devoted to God. The purpose of stating this here is that the trials which the Almighty makes people pass through are not meant to lead them astray; they are only meant to test them. Satan and his accomplices will not be able to harm in any way those of God's people who will try to pass this test.

In the opinion of my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī the antecedent of the genitive pronoun is وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ. In his opinion, the verse would mean: You can only make those people vehemently worship these deities who themselves intend to go to Hell. I am not fully convinced of this interpretation. I have only referred to it so that it can remain in the notice of those who want to reflect on these verses.

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (١٦٤) وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ (١٦٥) وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (١٦٦)[89]

The previous verses mention the traits and characteristics of the angels from the Almighty; in these verses, archangel Gabriel, at the behest of the Almighty, explains his own status and that of all the angels before God and what keeps them busy in His presence. The purpose is to disgrace those people who worship them considering them to be partners of God so that they hear from the very tongue of the archangel what their status is in contrast to what these foolish people are ascribing to these angels.

It needs to be kept in mind that there are a number of places in the Qur'ān where during a discourse something is said directly through the tongue of Gabriel. Verses 64-65 of Sūrah Maryam present an example of this. This style is adopted at places where an utterance from the tongue of Gabriel becomes more eloquent. This is one such instance. The most effective thing that could have rebutted the view of those who were inflicted with the false notion of angels being partners of God was a statement to the contrary by the angels themselves. Thus there could not have been a greater testimony than that of Gabriel's just referred to testimony about the status of his own self and that of other angels. Let us now see what Gabriel has testified to in this regard.

The first thing that he has said is that the circle of activity of every angel is prescribed and they have limited access (وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ). His own circle of authority is also limited and he cannot exceed that. Readers are advised to look up my explanation of the first verse of Sūrah

89. And for each of us is an appointed place and We stand arrayed before God. And We glorify Him.

Fāṭir. It is thus evident that the status of the angels is nothing but obedient and submissive workers; they can neither cross their limit nor interfere in any matter without God's permission nor can they dare take the initiative in doing any task. So how foolish are those who regard these subservient angels to be partners of God and expect that these angels can do for them whatever they desire; so much so, even if God intends to punish them, the angels will be able to save them.

The second thing that is stated is that the angels always stand arrayed before God and keep glorifying Him (وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ). The first verse of the *sūrah* also mentions angels standing in rows before God and I have explained this there. The word مُسَبِّحُونَ refers to precisely what the words فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا refer to in the beginning of the *sūrah*. In my opinion, this is an allusion to the prayer of the angels around the throne of the Almighty which is the greatest manifestation of they being servants of God. In the beginning of the *sūrah*, this prayer was referred by the word ذِكْرٌ and here it is called تَسْبِيْحٌ. The Qur'ān has alluded to the prayer by both these words. The dominant meaning of تَسْبِيْحٌ is to absolve God from all concepts and ascriptions that are against and beyond His majesty. By using this word, Gabriel has actually clarified that angels are busy absolving God of all negative ascriptions what to speak of being regarded as partners of God.

وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ (١٦٧) لَوْ أَنَّ عِندَنَا ذِكْرًا مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٦٨) لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٦٩) فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٧٠)[90]

The topic brought up in these verses is also discussed in verse 42 of Sūrah Fāṭir and I have explained it there. When it would be mentioned before the Quraysh that the Jews and other nations had rejected their prophets and messengers they would arrogantly mock at them. They would say that had the teaching of the earlier people come to them or had a messenger of God come to them, they would not have adopted this attitude; they would have followed his teachings and would have proven themselves to be special servants of God.

It is common practice that if a person does not have something, he often claims that had he been blessed with that thing he would have accomplished great feats; however, when he actually receives that thing more often than not he becomes a worse failure than those before him.

90. And indeed these people used to say: "Had we any teaching of the earlier generations we would have been among God's chosen servants." So they rejected it; so they shall soon come to know.

Today there are many people who haughtily claim that if they are given the reins of government they will once again show to the world a glimpse of the caliph 'Umar's rule; however, when they are put to test, they prove to be failures, embezzlers and thieves at the very first step. Very few people prove worthy of the task and not a single one proves successful from among those who make such tall claims. The whole history of the world bears witness to this.

The words فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ say that when the thing these people were desirous of came to them, they rejected it and tried to find various excuses to deny it; so they will soon know the fate of this denial.

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٧١) إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنصُورُونَ (١٧٢) وَإِنَّ جُندَنَا لَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ (١٧٣)[91]

This is a reference to the fate that is necessarily faced by the rejecters of messengers of God, and the purpose is to warn the Quraysh: if they do not mend their ways then the same established practice of God will materialize for them which materialized for other rejecters before them.

The word كَلِمَةُ refers to the established practice of the Almighty which relates to His messengers and is mentioned at various instances in the Qur'ān. At one place, it is described thus:

كَتَبَ اللهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٥٨: ٢٠-٢١)

The Almighty has ordained: "I and My messengers shall always prevail." Indeed, Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

At another place, the words are:

إِنَّا لَنَنصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ (٤٠: ٥١)

And We necessarily help Our messengers and the true believers in the life of this world and will also help them on the day when the witnesses rise to testify. (40:51)

I have explained at a number of instances in this exegesis that a nation which does not profess faith after the Almighty conclusively communicates the truth to it through His messenger is necessarily

91. And for our special servants sent as messengers this decision of Ours has been already delivered that they are the ones who shall be worthy of help and that Our army only is set to be victorious.

destroyed. A messenger is the final means of communicating the truth to his people; for this reason, his status is that of a court of justice for them. The struggle between good and evil which ensues through him culminates in his and his companions' dominance and in the destruction of his foes. I have explained all the phases of this established practice at appropriate instances. Here, the difference between a *nabī* (prophet) and a *rasūl* (messenger) should also be kept in mind by the readers that I have endeavoured to explain in this exegesis.

The words وَإِنَّ جُندَنَا لَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ imply that a whole army of God's angels is at the support of a messenger and his companions, and none can defeat those which have such support. A messenger and his companions are indeed faced with trials but in the end victory is theirs.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (١٧٤) وَأَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧٥)[92]

These verses are meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and to urge him to wait and show patience. The implication is that he should ignore the excesses committed by his adversaries so that God conclusively communicates the truth to them and they are left with no excuse to deny it. For a while, the Prophet (sws) should just observe what they are earning; they too will soon see what they have earned and in what shape its fate appeared before them.

أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (١٧٦) فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاء صَبَاحُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (١٧٧) وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (١٧٨) وَأَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧٩)[93]

The verses state that the Prophet (sws) should inform his addressees that the punishment with which they are being warned of is not something trivial. These addressees were the ones who were asking him to hasten this punishment and would say that unless they are shown a sample of it, they will not profess faith. When this punishment alights in their houses it will spell doom for those had been warned of it. The punishment which comes on the addressees of a messenger of God after they have warned them totally decimates them.

It may be kept in mind that in Arabia the actual time at which caravans

92. So pay no heed to them awhile, and observe them; they shall also soon observe.

93. Do they want to hasten Our punishment? They should remember that when it descends upon them in their courtyards, evil will be the morning of those who have been forewarned. So pay no heed to them awhile, and observe them; they shall also soon observe.

were raided was morning. For this reason, the word صباح connotes attack and raids. The proclamation in the word وا صباحا also carries this meaning.

After this, the topic of assurance and warning is repeated that was discussed earlier in verses 174-175: the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should ignore the misdemeanour of his enemies a little more and wait a while; the disbelievers are warned that very soon they will see from their very eyes all that with which they are being informed of.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٨٠)[94]

The verse states that exalted is God – the real master of all power and sovereignty – beyond all things these Idolaters ascribe to Him. He has informed them of their baseless views and their consequences; if they now do not desist from these things, they will see their fate.

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٨١)[95]

Just as after the mention of the anecdotes of other prophets earlier, each was given the glad tidings of peace here at the end this glad tiding is given to the prophet Muḥammad (sws). He is informed that the established practice of God which has materialized for all His messengers stands true for him as well; peace is for all messengers of God; destruction for all their enemies.

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٨٢)[96]

God alone is worthy of being thanked and praised. Hence in this struggle between the truth and falsehood He will definitely make the truth prevail and defeat falsehood. He is the Lord of the universe; it is the requisite of this state of His that justice prevail in this world as well as in that to come. This is the requisite of His providence and it is on this basis that He is worthy of gratitude and praise in this world and in the next one.

With these lines, the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* comes to its completion. فَالحَمْد لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (so gratitude be to the Lord of the worlds)

Raḥmānābād
29th April 1975

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94. Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of Glory, above their imputations!
95. And peace be on the messengers
96. And God alone is worthy of gratitude, Lord of the universe!

Sūrah Ṣu‘ād

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

Like the previous *sūrahs* of this group, this *sūrah* is also based on *tawḥīd*. It is explained in it that the Qur’ān is a great reminder for the Quraysh; however, merely because of their arrogance and haughtiness and because of their fervour and lunacy for polytheism are opposing them and are totally indifferent to the fate from which the Qur’ān is warning them of. They will profess faith after seeing their fate at a time when professing faith will be of no use to them.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-11): This Qur’ān is a reminder for people; however, because of arrogance and haughtiness they are opposing it. Many nations before them had adopted a similar attitude regarding the reminder of God and were destroyed. These people, like those before them, will also profess faith at a time when it will be of no avail. They are not able to digest the fact that a person from among them, as God’s messenger, should warn them of the fate of polytheism. Hence, with full force and enthusiasm they have undertaken to support their idols and ancestral religion and regardthe messenger as a sorcerer and a liar. They consider themselves to be the sole recipients of all the favours of God. For this reason, they are infatuated with the notion that had God intended to reveal a Book it would have been to some rich person among them and not, God forbid, to a poverty-stricken person as Muḥammad (sws). In other words, they think that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is in their hands; they fail to realize that when they will be seized by God, they will be totally helpless.

Verses (12-16): Some previous nations are mentioned who had similarly adopted an arrogant attitude with regard to the messengers of God and ultimately met a horrible fate. In this background, the Quraysh are warned not to invite the wrath of God; they will not be able to bear even one of His reprimands.

Verses (17-26): The Prophet (sws) is urged to be patient and steadfast. Some incidents from the life of David (sws) are referred to; he was blessed with great power and majesty; however, this did not make him

proud and arrogant; on the contrary, the more wealth and grandeur he was given, the more grateful and penitent he became. He would be chastened from the incidents that took place in the life of others and would seek from these incidents lessons of reforming himself. His was a just government and he meted out justice and fairness in the land. He never created disorder by being inflicted with arrogance.

Verses (17-29): This is a warning sounded at its opportune time: this world is not a place of amusement. Those who regard this to be so disbelieve in the Hereafter. If there is no Hereafter, then this would mean that the reformers and anarchists, the pious and the wicked have the same status in the eyes of the creator of this world. Such a thing cannot even be imagined about a wise creator. The Almighty has revealed this Book so that people reflect on its verses, be reminded by its arguments and come out from such dire misconceptions.

Verses (30-40): The wealth and majesty of Solomon (sws) are mentioned and certain incidents relating to his grateful and penitent attitude are referred to. The purpose is exactly the same as the one for which certain incidents relating to David (sws) were mentioned earlier.

Verses (41-49): In order to assure the Prophet (sws) some other prophets of God are briefly alluded to. These prophets faced hardships for the cause of God with fortitude and steadfastness. As a result, the Almighty granted them success both in this world and in that to come.

Verses (50-64): It is stated that this world is not a place in which people will be left unaccountable for their deeds. Hence, a day of judgement shall necessarily come in which the pious and the wrongdoers will be rewarded and punished for their deeds respectively. Next, this reward and punishment is explained.

Verses (65-88): In this closing section of the *sūrah*, a declaration is made by the Prophet (sws) that he is a warner and that there is no god except the one and dominant God; what he is informing people of is certain to come; those who are denying it because of arrogance are only following Satan and will meet the same fate destined for Satan and his accomplices.

Text and Translation

Section 1: Verses (1-16)

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ (١) بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ (٢) كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوْا وَّلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ (٣) وَعَجِبُوا أَن جَاءهُم مُّنذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَقَالَ

الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (٤) أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَـذَا لَـشَيْءٌ عُجَـابٌ (٥) وَانطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنِ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ (٦) مَـا سَـمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ (٧) أَأُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِن بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّن ذِكْرِي بَل لَّمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابِ (٨) أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّـابِ (٩) أَمْ لَهُم مُّلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ (١٠) جُندٌ مَّـا هُنَالِـكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْزَابِ (١١) كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَـادِ (١٢) وَثَمُـودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الأَيْكَةِ أُوْلَئِـكَ الْأَحْـزَابُ (١٣) إِن كُلٌّ إِلَّا كَـذَّبَ الرُّسُـلَ فَحَـقَّ عِقَابِ (١٤) وَمَا يَنظُرُ هَؤُلَاء إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مَّا لَهَا مِن فَوَاقٍ (١٥) وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَـا عَجِّـل لَّنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (١٦)

This is Sūrah Ṣu'ād. By the profusely reminding Qur'an [that everything it says is the truth]. In fact, those who have rejected it are the ones inflicted with arrogance and enmity. How many nations have We destroyed before them! So they created an uproar when it was too late to escape. (1-3)

These people expressed wonder that an informer from among themselves has come to them. And the disbelievers said: "He is a sorcerer and liar. Has he made all the gods as one? This is indeed a very strange thing." Their leaders got up saying: "Set out and stand firm in the worship of your gods; indeed, this is what needs to be done. We have not heard of this in this later period; it is nothing but a fabrication. Has this reminder been revealed to him alone among us?" In fact, they are in doubt about My reminder; in fact, they have not yet tasted My scourge. (4-8)

Are the treasures of your powerful and munificent Lord in their possession? Do they have sole control of whatever is in the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them? If this is so, then let them climb up to the sky. [When My scourge comes] then at that time the greatest of armies from the factions will certainly be defeated. (9-11)

Before them, the people of Noah, 'Ād, and the Pharaoh who had large armies denied; and also the Thamūd, the compatriots of Lot, and the dwellers of the Forest too. These are the factions. All of them denied the messengers; so My scourge did visit them. And these people also are waiting but for a single blast after which there is no respite. And they said: "Lord! Call us to account before the Day of Accountability comes!' (13-16)

Explanation

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ (١)[1]

The word ص is from among the abbreviated letters (*ḥurūf muqaṭṭa'āt*). It is also the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah*. I have already dealt in detail with these letters at the beginning of Sūrah Baqarah's *tafsīr*. Some people have tried to determine its meaning but in my opinion this is a needless effort.

Just as in Sūrah Yāsīn, the oath sworn by the Qur'ān is qualified by the attribute حَكِيْم, here this oath is qualified by the attribute: ذِي الذِّكْرِ. The actual meaning of ذِّكْر is to remind. The Qur'ān is an embodiment of reminding. That is why it is called ذِّكْر at various places. Verse 8 ahead is an example. There are many aspects because of which it is called by this name and attribute:

– It reminds man of all the truths innately found in human nature; however, he has forgotten them.

– It reminds man of the guidance which the Almighty revealed through his messengers for all His creatures and which people had forgotten.

– It reminds man of the important incidents that took place in this world in which God's mercy and torment manifested themselves.

– It informs man of the fate met by those who denied their respective messengers.

– It reminds man of the accountability and reward and punishment with which he will be faced once this world ends.

All these aspects are found in the attribute ذِي الذِّكْرِ. They will be further explained under verses 8-17, 46-49 and 86 of this *sūrah*.

The complement (*muqsam 'alayh*) of this oath is not mentioned in words. It is found in the oath itself. This style is adopted in places where such is the nature of the oath that its complement is evident from the oath itself. Similar is the case here. The purpose is that the reminders with which the Qur'ān is replete bear witness that what the Quraysh are being reminded of today is undeniable. If they are not believing in them, then this is not because there is any doubt in the Qur'ān; the mere reason for this denial is their egotism and enmity.

1. This is Sūrah Ṣu'ād. By the profusely reminding Qur'an [that everything it says is the truth].

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ (٢)[2]

The words الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا specially refer to the Quraysh. The verse states that the reason for their denial is not that there is any shortcoming in the reminders of the Qur'ān; the reason is their arrogance and enmity. Details of this arrogance and obduracy follow in the succeeding verses. The implication is that the problem lies not in the Qur'ān but in them. The Qur'ān is reminding them in a very effective and absorbing manner; its reminders are also based on sound arguments. However, how can these reminders influence those who have taken to egotism and enmity.

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوْا وَّلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ (٣)[3]

The implication of the verse is that it is really weighing down heavily on their egotism that they are being warned that if they adhere to denying the Qur'ān they will be seized by God's punishment. Many examples have already been narrated to them that nations who persisted in this obduracy were destroyed. When they were seized by God, they raised a lot of hue and cry and repented and declared faith; however, at that time, the possibility for them remained to evade this divine punishment. This is because after the manifestation of divine punishment the time for repentance and professing faith expires.

The word لَاتَ is actually لَا. The letter ت is added to it. Such an addition also takes place with ثُمَّ and رَبَّ. However, with this addition of ت the word لَاتَ specifically refers to negation of time.

وَعَجِبُوا أَن جَاءهُم مُّنذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (٤)[4]

The implication of this verse is that these people were wonder-struck on seeing someone from among them has come to them as a warner from God; why was someone from among them given this status? And if at all this was to be done, why did God select a poor person for this? Why did He not select someone from the chiefs of Makkah and Ṭā'if? In other words, the reasons for their denial were that a human being was given

2. In fact, those who have rejected it are the ones inflicted with arrogance and enmity.

3. How many nations have We destroyed before them! So they created an uproar when it was too late to escape.

4. These people expressed wonder that an informer from among themselves has come to them. And the disbelievers said: "He is a sorcerer and liar.

the status of God's messenger and that the human being selected was a pauper. This verse refers to the first of these reasons. In verse eight ahead, the second of these reasons is mentioned. Both these reasons signify conceit and arrogance earlier referred to by the word عِزَّةٍ.

The words وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ refer to the fact that it is because of their arrogance and haughtiness that these disbelievers regard God's messenger to be a sorcerer and a liar. At its appropriate place, I have already explained the reason why these disbelievers would regard the Prophet (sws) to be a sorcerer and the Qur'ān to be sorcery. The Quraysh could not refute the miraculous eloquence of the Qur'ān; however, they did not want it to influence their masses lest being mesmerized by the this eloquence they accept it as the word of God. In order to prevent this from happening, they would regard the Qur'ān as sorcery and the Prophet (sws) as a sorcerer. In this way, they would try to convince their followers that the impact and sway held by this discourse of this person is not because he received divine revelations but because he is a sorcerer and magician of words; for this reason, what he says effects the hearts. It is for this very reason that these people would also call the Qur'ān as poetry and the Prophet (sws) a poet.

The word كَذَّابٌ means a person whose is a liar and a bragger. They would call the Prophet (sws) by this name in their frenzied negation of his claim to prophethood. In other words, by using this word it would mean that though this person is a magician of words but to bluff the masses he claims that whatever he says is revealed to him from God and that he has been sent to them as a warner by Him. Since their real aversion was to the claim of Muḥammad (sws) to propehthood they would vehemently negate it, as is evident from this word.

The style of this verse bears witness that it expresses sorrow at these unfortunate people. In other words, the Almighty had sent a warner from among themselves to remind and warn them and also revealed a book replete with reminders yet because of arrogance and conceit they express wonder that a human being from among themselves has been sent to warn them. This haughtiness led these disbelievers to call a prophet of God as a sorcerer and a liar.

أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ (٥)[5]

Besides Muḥammad's (sws) claim to prophethood, the second thing

5. Has he made all the gods as one? This is indeed a very strange thing."

which the leaders of the Quryash had great aversion to was the message of *tawḥīd* preached by him. They would incite their masses by using this belief to their advantage. It is known that each tribe of Arabia had its own god and every tribe blindly believed in it. So these leaders would incite them with this vicious propaganda that this person has abolished all these gods and claims that there is only one God; what can be more eerie than this! A little deliberation shows that there are two poisonous slants hidden in this sentence: firstly, this person has done away with the all the gods except the God he believes in; secondly, he has done something so unique that its parallel cannot be found in their history of their forefathers. The word عُجَابٌ has more exaggeration and emphasis in it than عَجَيْبٌ. A little deliberation shows that this propaganda was enough to incite the whole Arabian nation against the Prophet (sws). However, the Almighty protected him against its evil.

وَانطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنِ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ (٦)[6]

This is a portrayal of the attitude which the leaders of the Quraysh would adopt to drive away people from the message of *tawḥīd* preached by the Prophet (sws): when at times they saw that people were being influenced by his message, they would walk away from that place and induce others as well to leave that place. They would advise them not to listen to what the Prophet (sws) has to say and to strongly adhere to the worship of their deities.

The words إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ mean that this is what needs to be done. The leaders of the Quraysh would tell the masses that the religion preached by this person is an attempt to make them renounce their ancestral religion; on the other hand, what needs to be done by each one of them is that in spite of his attempts they should strongly adhere to worshipping their deities till their last breath.

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ (٧)[7]

This is a refutation by the Quraysh of the history which the Prophet (sws) would narrate of the Arab nation. He had explained by citing history that all prophets of God from Noah (sws) to Abraham (sws) preached the pure message of *tawḥīd.* In particular, the teachings of

6. Their leaders got up saying: "Set out and stand firm in the worship of your gods; indeed, this is what needs to be done.

7. We have not heard of this in this later period; it is nothing but a fabrication.

Abraham (sws) and the history of Ishmael (sws) and the Baytullāh mentioned very clearly in the Qur'ān were meant to explain to the Arabs that the actual history of their nation begins with Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). These noble people had settled their progeny in Arabia to serve Islam and preach the pure message of *tawḥīd*. The house of God – whose custodianship is currently in the hands of Quraysh – was also built for this purpose. They have placed idols in every nook and corner of this House. This history narrated by the Qur'ān was a heavy blow to the claims of the Quraysh. Such was its clarity and influence that they had nothing to say in response that could appeal to the hearts of people. However, because of their stubbornness and arrogance they were also not willing to accept it. For this reason, they would say that they have never heard the message of *tawḥīd* in this later part of their history; hence what is being narrated to them of it is a total fabrication. What they meant was that had the history of the Arab nation been the one narrated by the Qur'ān and which Muḥammad (sws) is presenting in such a challenging manner, then at least some part of it should have been found in their later history; however, they have heard nothing of the like from their forefathers; it is the religion they are practicing which they received from them. They are following it and will keep following it.

Some people are of the opinion that الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ refers to the Christian nation; however, no contextual indication for this exists. This reference would only have been worthwhile for them if the Quraysh and their masses believed in this or if the Prophet (sws) had invited them to the belief of *tawḥīd* on the basis of the Christian nation.

أَأُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِن بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّن ذِكْرِي بَلْ لَمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابِ (٨)[8]

The verse states that while being overcome with the conceit of their political leadership they would say that if God wanted to reveal a book to a human being, then was He able to find only this person (ie. Muḥammad (sws)) for the task? Had God wanted to depute someone on this task, He would have chosen someone from the nobles of Makkah and Ṭā'if and not someone as penniless as him. They would reckon that when the Almighty has chosen them for all the successes of this world, why would He choose this person for this task? The verse actually expresses their arrogance referred to in verse two by the words: فِي عِزَّةٍ. It is to strike at this arrogance of theirs that it is said: بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّن ذِكْرِي

8. Has this reminder been revealed to him alone among us?" In fact, they are in doubt about My reminder; in fact, they have not yet tasted My scourge.

بَلْ لَمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابِ ie., this haughty attitude of theirs is because they are still in doubt about the punishment which the Qur'ān is reminding them of; they think that this is a bluff. The reason for this is that they have not observed this punishment as yet; they are ones who do not get convinced from arguments and only believe in what they see. In other words, what is implied is that for now arguments are being used to convince them; however, if this does not work, then the lash of punishment shall strike them.

أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ (٩) [9]

This verse is a response to their arrogance referred to by the previous verse that except for themselves they do not think that there is any other person worthy of any of God's favours; they think that God has handed over all the keys of all His treasures to them and given them the authority to distribute them to whomsoever they like and deprive whomsoever they desire. Thus they are not being able to understand why God should give prophethood and His Book to those who do not belong to their fraternity. They should realize that God is الْعَزِيز and الْوَهَّاب which means that He is the sole owner of all His treasures and also their sole distributor. He gives to those of His people in abundance who may not have any status before the eyes of these arrogant yet have a high status in the eyes of God. Thus these arrogant people should realize that if they have been given some ordinary things of life by God on which they are showing conceit, He has given the dominion of prophethood and wisdom to whomsoever He wanted to. No greater a status can be imagined beyond this. In Sūrah Ṭūr, this topic is mentioned in the following words:(٣٧ :٥٢) أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَبِّكَ أَمْ هُمُ الْمُصَيْطِرُونَ (Do they have the treasures of your Lord or are they in charge of them?) (52:37)

أَمْ لَهُم مُّلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ (١٠)[10]

This verse explains what is said earlier: if they claim that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to them, they should climb the skies and try to impede the mercy which the Almighty is revealing to His people.

The word أَسْبَاب connotes أَسْبَاب السَّمَاوَاتِ. This word is also used for

9. Are the treasures of your powerful and munificent Lord in their possession?

10. Do they have sole control of whatever is in the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them? If this is son, then let them climb up to the sky.

add-ons and borders of something. Research on the lexical aspects of this word has been presented earlier in this *tafsīr*.

جُندٌ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْزَابِ (١١)[11]

The word هُنَالِكَ points to the locus of the punishment referred to in verse eight by the words: لَمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابِ. What is meant is that if these people are waiting for the manifestation of God's punishment, they should remember that when it comes then the greatest of armies belonging to any people will not be able to stand before it; it is destined to be doomed. The word جُندٌ is not defined to express its magnitude and extent. What is thus implied is that whatever be the army and whatever be its magnitude and strength it will be routed by the torment of God.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ (١٢) وَثَمُودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ أُوْلَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ (١٣) إِن كُلٌّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ (١٤)[12]

The expression ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ means "companion of the pegs". In Arabic, pegs signify tents and from here this world is allegorically used for armies. This allegorical use of the word is similar to using the expression قُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَاتٍ to signify the generosity of a person. This expression is used in the Qur'an (34:13) to refer to the generosity of Solomon (sws). Here the expression ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ refers to the large number of the Pharaoh's armies who lived in tents. At many places in the Qur'ān, their plentiful number is referred to and all these armies drowned with him when the divine scourge visited them.

The expression refers to the people of Madyan. The word أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ means "forest". It seems that there was a forest near Madyan because of which its people were called thus. Research on it has already been presented earlier.

In verse eight, it was pointed out that when the divine torment arrives no group of faction however powerful it may be will be able to survive before it. The verses under discussion provide a historical proof of this.

11. [When My scourge comes,] then at that time the greatest of armies from the factions will certainly be defeated.

12. Before them, the people of Noah, 'Ād, and the Pharaoh who had large armies denied; and also the Thamūd, the compatriots of Lot, and the dwellers of the Forest too. These are the factions. All of them denied the messengers; so My scourge did visit them.

All these nations rejected their respective messengers and when as a consequence they were visited by divine punishment none could defend itself.

The enunciative (*khabar*) of أُوْلَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ is suppressed. This is because it is self-evident from the occasion and context and the next part of the verse is pointing to it. What is implied is: look at the fate these prominent nations; when the punishment of God arrived they were totally routed. In other words, the Quryash too will meet the same fate if they follow their ways.

The verse إِن كُلٌّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ alludes to the fact that the crime of each of these nations was that they rejected their respective messenger and the Quraysh too are now guilty of this crime. The expression فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ is actually فَحَقَّ عِقَابِي. In deference to the rhyme of the passage, the ي has been dispensed with the way it has been in: لَمّا يَذُوْقُوا عَذَابِ (٣٨: ٨)

وَمَا يَنظُرُ هَؤُلَاء إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مَّا لَهَا مِن فَوَاقٍ (١٥) وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّل لَّنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (١٦)[13]

The word فَوَاقٍ means "respite".

The word قِطَّ means "share".

The verse refers to the Quraysh: today they are arrogantly demanding the promised punishment as if they have impregnable defence against it; the fact of the matter is that only one shout of God will be needed to rout them; a second one would not even be required. Such will be its grasp that they will not be able to escape it even for a moment.

The verse points to the arrogance of the Quraysh in demanding the punishment. In their frenzy of rejecting Muḥammad (sws), they went as far as to say that if he is right in his claim that if they reject him a punishment will visit them, then let this punishment come before the Day of Judgement; in this manner, the truth of his claim will be known if he is really truthful and the falsity of his claim will also known if (God forbid) he is lying– which in their opinion he is. This demand of the Quraysh is also mentioned in Sūrah Anfāl in the following words:

وَإِذْ قَالُواْ اللَّهُمَّ إِن كَانَ هَـذَا هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِندِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاء

13. And these people also are waiting but for a single blast after which there is no respite. And they said: "Lord! Call us to account before the Day of Accountability comes!"

أَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٨: ٣٢)

And when they said: "Lord! If this is the truth from you, then rain down stones on us from the sky or send us a woeful torment. (8:32)

It is mentioned in certain narratives that at the time of the battle of Badr, Abū Jahal had prayed to God to crush the person who is guilty of severing blood ties to the extent that the swords of people within the Quraysh tribe are being unleashed against one another.

Section II: Verses (17-29)

In the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is directed to remain strong and steadfast on his stance in spite of the opposition of his enemies. He is also urged to seek guidance from the account of David (sws) and to also relate this account before the Quraysh: there is no comparison with the extent of wealth and riches the Almighty gave him in relation to the Quraysh. However, in spite of being blessed with so much He did not become arrogant and proud; on the contrary, the more he was given, the more thankful and inclined to God he became. He would listen to the disputes of people with great patience and forbearance and justly settle them. If during these hearings anything that was a means to seek a lesson came before him, he would bow down in repentance before God. He administered the great empire God gave him in accordance with the directives of God and was never led away by his desires while being overcome with arrogance. He was aware of the fact that after being blessed with authority in this world those who forget the authority of God and the accountability of the Hereafter will not be able to escape from His grasp. The reason is that God has not created this world as a place of amusement; it is essential that a day come in which He reward people who fulfilled their obligation to the *khilāfah* they were bestowed with on this earth and punish those who created disorder in the land because of their arrogance.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٧) إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (١٨) وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٩) وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَآتَيْنَاهُ

الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ (٢٠) وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (٢١) إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُودَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصْمَانِ بَغَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاء الصِّرَاطِ (٢٢) إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِيَ نَعْجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (٢٣) قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ إِلَى نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْ الْخُلَطَاء لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (٢٤) فَغَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَى وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٢٥) يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ (٢٦) وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ (٢٧) أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ (٢٨) كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٩)

Bear with what they say, and recount the tale of Our mighty servant David. Indeed, he was very penitent to God. We joined with him the mountains which would glorify God with him evening and morning, and the birds too, in all their flocks – all were penitent to God. We had made his kingdom strong, and gave him wisdom and the ability to judge affairs. (17-20)

Has the news of the rivals reached you who entered his chamber by climbing over the wall? When they reached David, he got alarmed. He said: "Do not be alarmed; we are two rivals in a case; one has committed excess against the other; so fairly judge between us and do not be unjust; and guide us to the right path." (21-22)

This is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewes, and I have only one ewe. Thus he demanded that I should consign this to him as well, and he got the better of me in the argument. David replied: "He has certainly been unjust to you by demanding your ewe for adding it to his flock. And many partners in this manner are unjust to one another; only those are an exception to it who have faith and do good deeds and such people are very few indeed." And David realized that We have tested him; so He sought forgiveness of his Lord and turned to him in penitence fell down on his knees and repented. So We forgave him, and indeed with Us is a

favoured place for him and a good fate. (23-25)

"O David! We have made you a caliph in the land; so deal with justice among men and you must not yield to your desire, lest it turn you away from God's path. Those who stray from the path of God shall be sternly punished because they became unmindful of the Day of Reckoning. (26)

And it was not in vain that We created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. This is the estimation of those who professed disbelief; so for those who have disbelieved is the devastation of Hell. Are We to equate those that have professed faith and did righteous deeds with those who spread anarchy in the land? Or are We to equate the pious with the defiant? This is an extremely blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that people may ponder on its verses and the wise are reminded by it. (27-29)

Explanation

اصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٧)[14]

Some very potent incidents from the lives of the prophets David (sws) and Solomon (sws) have also been mentioned in Sūrahs Anbiyā', Naml and Sabā'. Here some new incidents of their lives are recounted. These incidents are a means of assurance not only for the Prophet (sws) but are also a means of great guidance for the leaders of the Quraysh if they care to benefit from them. The word اذْكُرْ has two aspects in it. One of them relates to the Prophet (sws): when he hears an upsetting statement from his opponents, he should receive assurance from the life of God's servant David (sws). In spite of being powerful, he would bear with patience and fortitude the despicable behaviour of his opponents, decide matters with great justice and clemency and seek a lesson from the incidents of others.

The second aspect relates to the arrogant among the Quraysh which are under discussion. The Prophet (sws) should relate to them the incidents that took place in the life of God's servant David (sws): in spite of being much more rich and affluent than the Quraysh, this did not make him arrogant and conceited like them; he was a person who would always turn to God. It is evident from his life that he would realize his own mistakes from incidents that occurred in the lives of others and would fall down before his Lord in penitence.

The expression إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ means that he was a person who would turn to God. Incidents which are narrated here highlight this very trait of David

14. Bear with what they say, and recount the tale of Our mighty servant David. Indeed, he was very penitent to God.

(sws). In some of the other *sūrahs*, the trait of being grateful to God found in him and in his father is highlighted. In this *sūrah*, his humility and penitence are drawn attention to in order to strike at the arrogance of the Quraysh which is mentioned in the very first verse by the words: عِزَّةٍ and شِقَاقٍ.

It needs to be kept in mind that man is not an angel so that he cannot err. When man has been blessed with the favour of authority, and he is being tested with regard to this favour as well, there is a chance that he may err at every step. However, this possibility of erring on his part is not meant to ruin and rout him; through it, he can achieve great success for himself if he learns to turn to God and repent whenever he errs. A person falls in an abyss in this regard only when he keeps on erring until a stage is reached that he is so engulfed by sins from all sides that not only does he not realize himself what he doing, he, out of arrogance, embarks on inflicting harm on people who try to make him realize his follies. The Qur'ān here by simultaneously mentioning both attributes of ذَا الْأَيْدِ and أَوَّابٌ has shown that a person who has power and political authority will only be liked by the Almighty when besides being powerful he is also penitent. If power makes a person haughty and arrogant, then this turns him into a Nimrod and a Pharaoh who are cursed and have incurred the wrath of the Almighty.

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (١٨) وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٩)[15]

These verses explain the penitent nature of David (sws): he would glorify the Almighty morning and evening while sitting beside a mountain and when he would chant hymns of the Almighty from his Psalms in his melodious voice, the mountains too would join this chanting with him and birds too would flock together and unite with them in this singing. The Almighty had made his melodious voice and compassionate heart so moving and effective that the atmosphere around him would resound with his voice, and every nook and corner and every creature of God would join him in invoking and beseeching God and in turning to Him in penitence. I have already explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr* that every object of this universe glorifies the Almighty yet we may not understand it; if we do not understand this, it does not necessarily mean that no one can understand it. Just as the

15. We joined with him the mountains which would glorify God with him evening and morning, and the birds too, in all their flocks – all were penitent to God.

Almighty had blessed David (sws) with the mellow voice to melt mountains and attract birds, He had also blessed him with the earnest ears to understand their glorification of the Almighty. I have explained this in the earlier *sūrahs*. For this reason, I have only briefly alluded to it here.

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ (٢٠)[16]

This is a mention of the power and might of David (sws) referred to earlier by the word: ذَا الْأَيْدِ. The expression شَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ means "We fully strengthened his rule." This was done by blessing him with الْحِكْمَةَ and فَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ. I have already explained the first of these at its appropriate place. The second of these means the ability to pass judgement in disputes. In verse twenty three ahead, the word خِطَاب occurs in the meaning of dispute as well.

It is evident from this that for the stability of a government the foremost traits needed in a ruler are that he is replete with wisdom and has the ability to exercise the right judgement. If these traits are not found in a ruler, then the government stands on slippery grounds even though it may possess other means and resources in large quantities. Such a rule is only obtained with a strong relationship with God. Rulers who are devoid of this relationship end up inflicted with the arrogance and haughtiness which is being criticized here. They are the ones who not only are destroyed themselves but also lead their nations to destruction. Handing over the reigns of power to them is like giving over a sword to a naïve person.

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (٢١)[17]

This verse mentions an example of David's wisdom and justice or in the words of the Qur'ān his trait of فَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ (passing judgement in disputes). Some points become very evident from this:

Firstly, the poor and the rich were equal in his eyes as far as justice was concerned. During his rule, the poorest of persons could easily obtain his right imposed on the richest of persons.

Secondly, his subjects fully trusted him. People would come to him without any hesitation to have their disputes settled. So much so, if the

16. We had made his kingdom strong, and gave him wisdom and the ability to judge affairs.

17. Has the news of the rivals reached you who entered his chamber by climbing over the wall?

sentinels caused any impediment, they would even scale the walls of his palace to come to his presence; they would boldly present their cases before him and he would decide them with great patience and fortitude; he would not be disturbed in the slightest sense that people had breached his privacy or not properly addressed him or did not care about his guards and sentinels.

Thirdly, the very law in the light of which he would judge others would also be the one on the basis of which he would continue to evaluate his own matters and dealings. If in this process of self-accountability, he would find the slightest of deviation on his part, he would turn to God in penitence and reform the mistake.

While keeping these principle points in mind, let us now reflect on the actual incident.

The style found in the address هَلْ أَتَاكَ not only expresses the importance of the incident but also urges and exhorts the addressee. It is not necessary that one interprets this address in the singular to be directed to the Prophet (sws). It has already been explained at various instances of this exegesis that an address in the singular can also imply plural entities.

The word خَصْم is used for the rival parties of a case. It can imply both singular and plural entities.

Consider next the expression: إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ. The verb تَسَوَّرَ means "to climb a wall." According to linguistic principles of Arabic, this word encompasses the meaning of دخلوا (they entered). The overall expression would be to the effect: تَسَوَّرُوا الجِدَارَ وَ دَخَلُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (they climbed the wall and entered the miḥrāb). The word مِحْرَابَ can refer to one of the rooms of David's palace and the palace itself as well. In Arabic, at times the part refers to the whole.

The whole nature of this incident that can be gauged from these words is that the two rival individuals of a case together with their companions tried to go to David (sws) at a time which was not reserved for hearing such disputes; it was, in fact, the time for rest or for worship. The sentinels at the main gate did not allow them to enter the palace at this wrong time; however, they did not get frustrated and secretively climbed the wall from some other place and entered the palace. Entering the palace of a great ruler in this manner was indeed a very serious offence which entailed a severe punishment in general circumstances; however, since they fully trusted the forbearance of David (sws), they made this audacious move.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُودَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصْمَانِ بَغَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاء الصِّرَاطِ (٢٢)[18]

It was but natural that David (sws) became anxious at their manner of entry. So he got worried thinking that these people were thieves or robbers who had covertly entered the palace without coming into the notice of the sentinels. However, these visitors pacified him by saying that they were not his enemies and hence there was no cause of worry for him; they told him that they had come to him as rival parties of a dispute; one of them had been unjust to the other and now they require his verdict and that he should fairly judge between them without showing any bias and show them the straight path in this regard.

These people had landed at a very inappropriate time and the way they chose to come to him was also very unbecoming; the manner in which they conversed was also indecent as is evident from the words لَا تُشْطِطْ. However, they were fully aware of the temperament of their ruler. They well knew that if they speak to him in the wrongest of ways and if they come over to him at the most inopportune time, once they reach him, he will forgive their blemishes if he comes to know that they have come to seek justice. In such a situation, it was their expectation, that he would go on to fairly and squarely decide their dispute. Their hopes materialized cent per cent. When David (sws) was satisfied at the need that brought them to him, he immediately turned his attention to resolve their dispute and totally ignored their blemishes.

If we read about the life of 'Umar (rta), we find that he too was no different. His door was never closed to the needy. People would stop him on the way and very boldly, in fact, at times very insolently present their petitions. He would hear them out very patiently and attentively and would address their needs without delay.

إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِيَ نَعْجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (٢٣)[19]

This verse states the actual details of the dispute which the aggrieved person presented before David (sws). While pointing to his rival, he said

18. When they reached David, he got alarmed. He said: "Do not be alarmed; we are two rivals in a case; one has committed excess against the other; so fairly judge between us and do not be unjust; and guide us to the right path."

19. This is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewes, and I have only one ewe. Thus he demanded that I should consign this to him as well, and he got the better of me in the argument.

that this is his brother who has ninety-nine ewes and he himself has one; his brother's demand is that he should hand over his ewe to him; for this he fights with him and gets the better of him.

It needs to be kept in mind that in those times the real wealth of that land was goats and ewes. Before he became king, David (sws) too spent his time among his ewes and in shepherding them. It is evident from the annals of that period that the picture of an ewe was engraved on the coins of those times and an ewe was also called *na'jah*. Even if this is not true, it is known that this word was commonly used in those times for wealth and possessions.

The word الْخِطَاب in وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ connotes "argument and discussion." Since one of them was a wealthy person and a wealthy person finds supporters very easily, he must have prevailed upon his rival by convincing others in his own favour.

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ إِلَى نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (٢٤)[20]

The word سُؤَالِ here connotes "demand." It is commonly used in this meaning in Arabic. This has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. The preposition إِلَى after it shows that it embraces the meaning of ضَمَّ (add) or خَلَطَ (mix).

As soon as he heard the details of the dispute, David (sws) realized that the wealthy person had been unjust and then declared his own verdict without any bias or concession. He told the aggrieved person that by demanding to hand over his ewe to his flock that person has been grossly unfair. At the same time, David (sws) also remarked that most parties of a case while trying to make their ninety-nine ewes hundred perpetrate this injustice with others. Only they are an exception to this who adhere to faith and do righteous deeds and such people are very few. An element of emphasis and exaggeration is added to the word قَلِيلٌ (few) by the

20. David replied: "He has certainly been unjust to you by demanding your ewe for adding it to his flock. And many partners in this manner are unjust to one another; only those are an exception to it who have faith and do good deeds and such people are very few indeed." And David realized that We have tested him; so He sought forgiveness of his Lord and turned to him in penitence fell down on his knees and repented.

addition of the letter: مَا

The words وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ direct our attention to the special trait of turning to God in penitence that David (sws) had. In spite of being a king, he was never afflicted with arrogance like many people; he was a person who feared God; thus he evaluated his own situation in the light of this incident and realized one of his own mistakes. This made feel embarrassed before God and he prostrated before Him seeking His forgiveness.

What was the mistake he made? The Qur'ān has not specified it; it is a secret between David (sws) and his Lord, and hence no one even has the right to find out what it was. It is clear from the words أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ that as soon as David (sws) gave his verdict in the case, he realized that he too was undergoing a similar test. If a person insists on constructing an incident on the basis of these words, then, keeping in mind the circumstances of David (sws), he can suppose that just because of some individual or collective need at times kings need to intervene in the ownership of some asset of others, a similar need must have arisen in David's case. Most kings do not care for anyone in such matters. In order to keep the road to their palaces straight and short they bulldoze the huts of the poor. David (sws) was however a compassionate king; he could not have done such a thing and if there was some desire in his heart to get hold or intervene in the ownership of an asset belonging to someone, he must have repented after witnessing this incident. It is the quality of a good natured person to learn a lesson from what he sees in others and if a wrong desire arises in him, he must ask for God's forgiveness. This is what farthest can be understood from the Qur'ān. As far as the incident are concerned which are generally found in our *tafsīr* books, I can only pray that God forgive the authors who mentioned them in their works.

The words وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ refer to both kneeling and prostration. Kneeling is mentioned in words while the word رَاكِعًا signifies prostration. The word أَنَابَ refers to penitence of the heart. Kneeling and prostration are the outward forms of penitence to God. The real spirit is engendered in them through penitence of the heart.

فَغَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَٰلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٢٥)[21]

God forgave David (sws) after he sought forgiveness from him, and

21. So We forgave him, and indeed with Us is a favoured place for him and a good fate.

since every true repentance increases the status of a person and every penitence takes him closer to God, hence David's status increased before God.

يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ (٢٦)[22]

After the above-referred to admonition and after David's repentance, God clearly told him that by granting him some authority and sovereignty, He has made him a caliph in this earth; it is a requirement of this position that David (sws) exercise this authority according to the will of the being who bestowed this position to him and that he should justly decide between people; moreover, he should never be lured away by his desires otherwise they will make him deviate from truth and justice; he should also remember that those who turn away from the path of God will be inflicted with a heavy punishment in the Hereafter because they ignored its advent.

The directive given here to David (sws) stands for all the rulers in fact all individuals of this world. Whoever is blessed with authority and sovereignty is blessed with these from God and he shall be accountable about these on the Day of Judgement; he will have to answer God whether he used them according to His will or according to his own desires; those who ignored the Hereafter and followed their desires will face the fate mentioned earlier.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ (٢٧)[23]

Once the tale of David (sws) ended on the previous verse, this verse is directed at the addressees of this *sūrah*. They are explained why it is necessary that a day come wherein each person be held accountable

22. "O David! We have made you a caliph in the land; so deal with justice among men and you must not yield to your desire, lest it turn you away from God's path. Those who stray from the path of God shall be sternly punished because they became unmindful of the Day of Reckoning.

23. And it was not in vain that We created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. This is the estimation of those who professed disbelief; so for those who have disbelieved is the devastation of Hell.

before God. He shall be asked whether he correctly exercised his God-given authority or did it wrongly. It is specified that if a day of judgement does not come, then this would mean that this world is a meaningless and purposeless place in which there is no distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil, truth and falsehood. It is stated that God has not created this world purposelessly. He has in fact created it with truth and in order for the truth to manifest itself the day of judgement was appointed. On this day, each person will be rewarded or punished for his deeds.

The words ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا imply that only those people think that this world has been created purposelessly who belie the Hereafter. To them, this world is everything. Since in this world a person is not necessarily punished for his evil deeds nor rewarded for the pious ones, these people think that the Creator does not make any distinction between good and evil.

The words فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ state that those who deny the Hereafter and are oblivious of its reward and punishment will face the destruction of Hell.

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ (٢٨)[24]

This question expresses wonder: do those people who do not believe in the Hereafter and its reward and punishment think that God will equate the believers with those spread disorder in the earth or He will deal in the same manner with those who fear Him and those who not? In other words, this is what will happen if the Hereafter is not believed in and such a thing cannot be imagined about a God Who is wise, gracious and powerful. It is this reality which Jesus (sws) has explained in his vineyard parables in various styles. He has stated that how is it possible that a master depute his slaves to safeguard His vineyard and then while a few of them commit excesses in it and others diligently do their duty and the master deals equally with both of them. If someone does this, then this can only be either because he is helpless and unaware or is very foolish and unjust – and exalted is the Almighty from both these states.

24. Are We to equate those that have professed faith and did righteous deeds with those who spread anarchy in the land? Or are We to equate the pious with the defiant?

كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٩)[25]

The Prophet Muhammad (sws) is addressed here a Book has been revealed to him to remind people of these very facts; it is a blessed Book that enlivens hearts. The purpose of revealing this Book is that men of understanding reflect on its verses and receive a reminder. Its revelation is a great favour of God to His people provided they give up their behaviour of arrogance and conceit and give this Book the importance it deserves. What is said here is the same as what was stated in the first verse of the *sūrah*.

Section III: Verses (30-40)

In the succeeding verses, various incidents from the life of Solomon (sws), the famous son of David (sws), are portrayed. The purpose is to show that he exactly followed the footsteps of his father. God bestowed on him unparalleled power and majesty. However, this did not make him arrogant and spread disorder in the land; in fact, in whatever step he took, he would always fear God and if even a slight blemish would emanate from him, he would prostrate before God while seeking His forgiveness. These incidents are narrated to the leaders of the Quryash to remind and counsel them.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُودَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٣٠) إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ (٣١) فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ (٣٢) رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ (٣٣) وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ (٣٤) قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَّا يَنبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٣٥) فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاء حَيْثُ أَصَابَ (٣٦) وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاء وَغَوَّاصٍ (٣٧) وَآخَرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ (٣٨) هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٩) وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَى وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٠)

And We blessed David with Solomon; he was a good person. Indeed, he was very penitent to God. (30)

25. This is an extremely blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that people may ponder on its verses and the wise are reminded by it.

One day in the evening, thorough bred and elegant steeds were brought before him for inspection; so he said: "My love for wealth has distracted me from the remembrance of my Lord until the sun has vanished behind the veil. Bring them back to me!" So he started to strike his sword on their shins and necks. (31-33)

And We put Solomon through a trial and We placed a corpse on his throne. Then he repented. He prayed: "My Lord! Forgive me and bestow upon me such a kingdom which is not worthy for anyone except me. You are the Bountiful Giver." So We put the wind to his service which blew in harmony at his bidding wherever he intended to go. (34-36)

And unruly jinn too we subjected to his control; and very adept builders and divers and other jinn also that were fettered in chains. (37-38)

All this is Our bestowal uncountable; so if you want you can give it or withhold it. And indeed for him we have a special place of nearness and the best place of return. (39-40)

Explanation

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُودَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٣٠)[26]

Solomon (sws) is mentioned in relation to David (sws) in a manner as if he was given by God as a gift to David (sws) for his virtuous deeds.

The expression نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ states the greatest quality of this great son: he was a good person. It needs to be kept in mind that none of his miracles and marvels with which books are replete is mentioned here. If anything is mentioned then it is that he was a wonderful human being. The real quality of human being is that he becomes such a devoted servant to his Lord that God too bears witness to this trait of his. If a person is able to achieve this perfection, then all other qualities of his ensue from this basic quality, and if he does not have this trait, then if anyone is even able to acquire the ring of Solomon (sws), this has no value in the sight of God.

The attribute إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ referred to here is precisely the same as was mentioned for David (sws) earlier. In other words, the son was a mirror image of the father as regards this attribute. The real majesty of a human being is that his heart's attention is always directed to God, and if there is any blemish in this regard he scurries back to God in the blink of an eye. It is this penitent attitude which the Almighty likes most in His

26. And We blessed David with Solomon; he was a good person. Indeed, he was very penitent to God.

creatures. A person is able to gain much more than what he loses because of a sin if he truly repents later.

إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ (٣١) فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ (٣٢) رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ (٣٣)[27]

Just as an example of the penitent nature of David (sws) is mentioned earlier, an example of the penitent nature of Solomon (sws) is presented here in these verses. Readers may first like to understand the real picture of the incident in simple words. Later they may evaluate its parts.

What becomes evident from the words of the Qur'ān is that some day late in the afternoon a pack of thorough bred horses were paraded before Solomon (sws) for inspection. Horses were large in number and the inspection was a very absorbing affair. Solomon (sws) became so deeply involved in it that the sun set and the *'aṣr* prayer was missed. When he remembered that he had missed the prayer that he could not restrain himself on this huge blemish. He thought that the love of this world made him forget the remembrance of God. He was so overwhelmed with remorse that he asked the horses to be brought back to him and started to strike their necks and shanks with his sword because it was their love which had made him forget God's remembrance.

This is case of a person being overwhelmed with emotions while the motive is very noble. This makes it a very laudable thing; however, since in this state a person may exceed the balanced way taught by the *sharī'ah*, this attitude is not acceptable to religion. A similar situation arose when 'Umar (rta) was overcome by emotions when he heard the news of the Prophet's (sws) death. Thus when Abu Bakr (rta) chastened him by directing his attention to certain verses of the Qur'ān, he regained his composure. It is possible that Solomon (sws) too realized this folly of his own or God may have made him realize it, though the Qur'ān does not mention either. Here the step he took is mentioned to express his passionate penitence and overwhelming desire to repent. No doubt, the incident depicts these glorious traits in a very clear manner.

Consider next the words: إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ. The word صَافِنَات refers to a special breed of thorough bred horses while the word

27. One day in the evening, thorough bred and elegant steeds were brought before him for inspection; so he said: "My love for wealth has distracted me from the remembrance of my Lord until the sun has vanished behind the veil. Bring them back to me!" So he started to strike his sword on their shins and necks.

جِيَاد refers in general to good quality horses. In other words, these horses were good not only with regard to their pedigree but also with regard to their qualities. The Torah mentions details of these horses of Solomon (sws).

In the verse فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ the word أَحْبَبْتُ encompasses the meaning of evasion and heedlessness, and the word عَن points to this.

The subject of the verb تَوَارَتْ which is الشَّمْس is suppressed here. In Arabic, verbs and pronouns occur in such a way for known and famous objects. The subject of a verb or the antecedent of a pronoun is understood through contextual indications. Here the word الْعَشِيّ is a contextual indication to the subject of the verb تَوَارَتْ and hence it was not stated in words.

Before the verb فَقَالَ some part of the discourse is suppressed viz: Solomon (sws) got so deeply involved in the inspection of the parade that the time for the *'aṣr* prayer passed. When he realized what had happened, he remarked: "I have preferred the love of wealth over the remembrance of God until the sun hid and I was deprived of my *'aṣr* prayer." Obviously, this statement was an expression of sorrow from him. Even though the horses he was inspecting had been bred for *jihād* and the inspection itself was a part of the activities of *jihād*, yet since the prayer occupies the most fundamental position in religion it cannot be sacrificed except in compelling circumstances. I have dwelt upon this issue in detail at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*.

It is evident from contextual indications that the expression ذِكْرِ رَبِّي refers to the *'aṣr* prayer. This is because in الْعَشِيّ ie late afternoon, only the *'aṣr* prayer is offered. The question arises: Did the *'aṣr* prayer also exist in the Jews? It is evident from the verse under discussion that they offered some prayer in the late afternoon before the sun went down. If the *'aṣr* prayer is not found in the Torah, then this does not matter because the Qur'ān in explicit words has said that the Jews were guilty of wasting the prayer.[28] The times of prayer prescribed by Islam are so natural and logical that the heart bears witness that these same times must have been prescribed by other religions but they squandered them by differing in them.

Here it may be kept in mind that it was regarding the *'aṣr* prayer that the Prophet Muhammad (sws) and his companions were faced with a

28. Thus about the Jews the Qur'ān says: أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ (١٩: ٥٩) (They wasted the prayer, (19:59)).

trial during the battle of the ditch. I have already alluded to some aspects of the importance of the *'aṣr* prayer while explaining the term صلواة الوسطى in Sūrah Baqarah (2:238).

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ is horses referred to in الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ. The verb مَسَح is also commonly used to mean killing and the verbal noun occurs to emphasize the suppressed verb. The actual construction is يَمْسَحُ مَسْحًا

The words فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ refer to the step undertaken by Solomon (sws) while being overwhelmed by emotions of remorse. He ordered for the horses to be brought back. It seems that Solomon (sws) was afflicted with these emotions once the horses had gone back to their stables. He thought that it was these horses which were the cause of him forgetting God. He thus had them called back and started to strike their shins and necks with his sword. It is very clear that these words portray him being overwhelmed with emotions. The word طَفِقَ refers to this. The only thing that is evident from this verse is that Solomon (sws) did swing his swords a few times. It does not become evident that he killed all the horses and this was not possible as well because it is evident from the Torah that they were in hundreds. It seems he swung the sword a few times and then realized what he was doing after which he stopped. Since this incident reflects his penitence in a memorable way, the Qur'ān has mentioned it. A similar incident took place with regard to 'Umar (rta) to which we have referred to earlier. Such incidents which reflect a person being overwhelmed with emotions cannot be cited as exemplars for others. Hence sufis which have adduced the allowance of tearing apart the apparel from the chest from this incident are not correct in their inference.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ (٣٤) قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَّا يَنبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٣٥)[29]

This is another incident that reflects Solomon's penitent attitude. Since this incident has also been portrayed in a distorted manner in our *tafsīr* books, let us first try to understand the incident in simple words. Later,

29. And We put Solomon through a trial and We placed a corpse upon his throne. Then he repented. He prayed: "My Lord! Forgive me and bestow upon me such a kingdom which is not worthy for anyone except me. You are the Bountiful Giver."

readers can reflect on the words of the verses.

It is evident from history that once Solomon (sws) was put through an extreme trial: his enemies attacked and seized many of his territories and created so much disorder in the remaining territories that the system of governance was severely disrupted. Only the central territory of his kingdom remained in his hands where he had to remain confined. This was a trial from God. Solomon (sws) was a kindhearted king. He thought that God has punished him for some blemish. This thought magnified his sorrow and in this state of helplessness he became a like a lifeless skeleton on his throne. At that time, he very humbly invoked the Almighty to forgive his sins and prayed that though he was no longer worthy of God's favours and blessings, he in spite of this be granted such a kingdom which no one who has committed such a sin is worthy of.

The expression وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ means: "We put Solomon through a trial." This trial is an established practice of God. It is not necessary that this trial was the result of some sin committed by Solomon (sws). Tests and trial befall all prophets and messengers of God. They are meant to test their patience or gratitude. Solomon (sws) was put through a similar trial and since he was a king, this trial came through his kingship.

The words وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا concisely, yet very comprehensively portray the trial which Solomon (sws) faced. Initially, his kingdom spanned a large area and he powerfully ruled it. Later the Almighty placed his lifeless skeleton on his throne. The word جَسَدًا metaphorically alludes to the helplessness and sorrowful state of Solomon (sws). The implication is that his rule became confined to only the central territory of his kingdom and circumstances made him so helpless and sad as if only his body remained and the soul left him. Deliberation will show that there could not have been a better portrayal than this to convey the helplessness and sadness of a king.

The words ثُمَّ أَنَابَ say that even in these circumstances, Solomon (sws) did not show despair in God; on the contrary, he realized that this might have happened to some sin he may have done. He thus turned to God in penitence.

The words قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَّا يَنبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي do not mean that Solomon (sws) had prayed to God to grant him a kingdom which no one after him should have. Solomon actually meant that though because of his sin he does not deserve any kingdom; yet out of His grace, God should grant him such a kingdom which neither he nor any one after him deserves.

The words إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ of Solomon (sws) refer to the fact that God

graciously gives; so in spite of his blemishes, he hopes that God will not deprive him of His grants.

The real emphasis in this prayer is not to receive an unparalleled majestic kingdom but on a kingdom which a person is not entitled to. Solomon (sws) actually meant that in spite of his folly he be granted a kingdom which no one after him is worthy of. The strong realization of his mistake found in this prayer bears testimony to Solomon's humility and penitence. All kindhearted rulers always regard the calamities which visit their countries to be a result of their sins. Various narratives say that in the times of 'Umar (rta) a great famine struck. It was famously called *'Ām al-rimādah*. All the time during this famine, 'Umar would weep profusely and pray: O God! Let not the ummah of Muḥammad be destroyed from my hands.

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاء حَيْثُ أَصَابَ (٣٦)[30]

The style of this verse points to the fact that after undergoing the aforementioned trial, Solomon (sws) was granted such control of the winds by the grace of Almighty that no one ever had. I have mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anbiyā' and of certain other *sūrahs* that the maritime power of Solomon (sws) was the greatest of his times and his naval fleet was also the most powerful of his times. This is because to control the sea breezes, he had developed the sailing system of a ship so much that his ships would travel long distances in all types of waters. Scanty or strong winds would not affect their passage. These ships would easily glide through most tempestuous of winds and would continue to sail without any hindrance even if they would not get a favourable wind. Just as David (sws) made tremendous progress viz a viz the iron industry and afforded himself an unconquerable land force, in a similar manner Solomon (sws) made great progress in the sailing system of ships and strengthened his naval power beyond compare.

The word أَصَابَ in تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاء حَيْثُ أَصَابَ means "to set a target," just as there is the idiom: أَصَابَ السَّهْمُ. In other words, whichever territory Solomon (sws) would set as the destination of his ships, they would depart to it without any hindrance and without waiting for the right season. This is because the wind was in his control; whenever he wanted, he would make it favourable for his journey.

30. So We put the wind to his service which blew in harmony at his bidding wherever he intended to go.

وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاء وَغَوَّاصٍ (٣٧) وَآخَرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ (٣٨) [31]

Besides subjecting the winds to his control, the Almighty had also blessed Solomon (sws) with the power to control rebellious jinn who he would employ not only in constructing buildings but also as deep sea divers who would bring back a lot of useful wealth from the bottom of the sea. The word الشَّيَاطِينَ refers to the devils among the jinn. It is evident from this that Solomon (sws) would only subject the rebellious jinn to his control and would leave alone the righteous among them. In my opinion, the word كُلَّ in كُلَّ بَنَّاء وَغَوَّاصٍ is to emphasize both the attributes. In other words, he had subjected very efficient builder and very adept diver to his control.

The words وَآخَرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ refer to the fact that another faction of the jinn fettered in chains would be available to him as reserve force which he could employ when needed.

هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٩)[32]

The expression بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ is connected to هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا. In other words, these great favours are far beyond the imagination and expectation of Solomon (sws). He could not have thought of them even in his dreams.

The words فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ signify the authority Solomon (sws) had – the authority which every master has over his assets and every king has over his kingdom. These words do not mean that if Solomon (sws) desires, he can spend on people and if he does not, then he can withhold his wealth from them – he has both options. The words in fact mean that he has the freedom to choose between both of these options; however, if he chooses generosity then he will fulfill his obligation towards the wealth he has been blessed with and will be rewarded for it. However, if he guards his treasure like a snake he will see the fate of this behaviour when he goes to God who gave him all this.

The way Solomon (sws) has been addressed here in these words is exactly similar to the following words addressed to Dhū al-Qarnayn:

قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِمَّا أَن تُعَذِّبَ وَإِمَّا أَن تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا (١٨: ٨٦)

31. And unruly jinn too we subjected to his control; and very adept builders and divers and other jinn also that were fettered in chains.

32. All this is Our bestowal uncountable; so if you want you can give it or withhold it.

We said: O Dhū al-Qarnayn! [We have given them in your control; so] if you want you can punish them and if you want you can be kind to them. (18:86)

Some people have understood the following message from the verse under discussion: after blessing all this to Solomon (sws), God gave him the license to do whatever he wants to and he would not be held accountable for whatever he does. This understanding is totally incorrect. Not withstanding other things, one may take a look at the directive given to David (sws) in verse twenty six earlier in. One may see that how can the son be granted such freedom after the father has been given such a directive.

وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَى وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٠)[33]

The verse implies that after receiving so much wealth, Solomon (sws) was not afflicted with arrogance and conceit; on the contrary, he was penitent person. For this reason, he will be given a special status of proximity to God and the best of abodes.

Section IV: Verses (41-64)

In the succeeding verses, in order to assure Muḥammad (sws) some prophets are mentioned who faced great trials in their life. These prophets never despaired or lost hope; they courageously faced adverse circumstances and resorted to God for their afflictions. The Almighty alleviated their bothers and blessed them with His favours. Later this discussion is concluded by saying that the best of abodes with God are for His virtuous people. After this, the fate met by the virtuous and the wrongdoers is described.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ (٤١) ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ (٤٢) وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكْرَى لِأُوْلِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٤٣) وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا فَاضْرِب بِّهِ وَلَا تَحْنَثْ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٤٤) وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُوْلِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ

33. And indeed for him we have a special place of nearness and the best place of return.

(٤٥) إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُم بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (٤٦) وَإِنَّهُمْ عِندَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٧) وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِّنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٨) هَذَا ذِكْرٌ وَإِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٩) جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ مُّفَتَّحَةً لَّهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ (٥٠) مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ (٥١) وَعِندَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ أَتْرَابٌ (٥٢) هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٥٣) إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِن نَّفَادٍ (٥٤) هَذَا وَإِنَّ لِلطَّاغِينَ لَشَرَّ مَآبٍ (٥٥) جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٥٦) هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَغَسَّاقٌ (٥٧) وَآخَرُ مِن شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ (٥٨) هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ (٥٩) قَالُوا بَلْ أَنتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ أَنتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوهُ لَنَا فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ (٦٠) قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَن قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ (٦١) وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُم مِّنَ الْأَشْرَارِ (٦٢) أَتَّخَذْنَاهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا أَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمُ الْأَبْصَارُ (٦٣) إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ (٦٤)

And recall Our servant Job when he called out to his Lord: "Satan has afflicted me with great sorrow and worry." We said to him: "Stamp your feet upon the earth; this water is cool for bathing and for drinking also." And We blessed him with his wife and children and like them more with them: To bless them from Ourself and to remind the prudent. "And take a bunch of twigs and strike yourself with it and do not break your oath." We found him full of patience. A good person! Indeed, he was very penitent. (41-44)

And recall Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were men of might and vision. For a special mission – reminding of the Hereafter – We had deputed them. And they are with us among chose and noble people. (45-47)

And recall Ishmael, al-Yasa', and Dhū al-Kifl. Each of them is among the best. (48)

This is a reminder and indeed for the God-fearing there is a good abode: the gardens of Eden, whose gates shall be opened to them. They shall recline in them and would demand many fruits and drinks there. And with them will be bashful houris of the same age. This is the thing for which you would be given glad tidings for the Day of Accountability. This is our sustenance which will never finish. (49-54)

This is on the one hand, and [on the other] for the rebellious there is a very bad abode: they shall enter Hell. What an evil place it is! Here is scalding water and pus. Thus these people should taste them and there will be other things as well of similar sort. (55-58)

This group is also set to enter Hell with you. The curse of God be on them. They are to enter Hell. They will reply: "In fact, the Curse of God be on you. You were responsible for what has happened to us." Thus, what an evil abode it will be! They will say: "Lord, inflict on those who brought this fate upon us a twofold punishment in Hell." (59-61)

And they will say: "What is the matter! We are not able to see those whom we used to regard as miscreants. Did we regard them a mere joke or is it that our eyes missing are them?" Indeed, this bickering between the companions of Hell is a certain event. (62-64)

Explanation

وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ (٤١)[34]

The trials suffered by Job (sws) have already been discussed in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anbiyā'. Here only those things will be discussed which relate specifically to this *sūrah*. All the trials a person goes through are at the bidding of God; however, one of their causes is Satan as well. Hence, as far as intention and will are concerned, trials are ascribed to God; but with regard to their reason they are ascribed to Satan. It is because of that aspect the Job (sws) attributed his sorrow and affliction to Satan. It is evident from the Book of Job in the Bible that Job (sws) possessed great wealth and majesty. In spite of this, he was very sympathetic to the poor and very austere in worshipping the Almighty. Satan and his agents were very jealous of this state of his and they started a propaganda campaign against him. They would say that what great achievement has been reaped by Job (sws) if he worships the Almighty day and night because a person who has so much wealth and means can easily afford this involvement. What else can he do? They would continue with this vicious campaign by saying that only if he is deprived of these things by God and he still continues with such devotion in worship would they really acknowledge him as a great human being. At last, God deprived Job (sws) of all these things. He neither had any wealth left with him nor any sons and grandsons nor other assets that had afforded him with such grandeur. However, in spite of this great affliction he did not despair; on the contrary, he fell down in prostration before his Lord and said: "I was born naked from the womb of my mother and naked will I go to my Lord." It is mentioned in the Book of Job (sws) that after this God said to Satan that the latter had seen how Job (sws) still remain God's obedient servant in spite of being deprived

34. And recall Our servant Job when he called out to his Lord: "Satan has afflicted me with great sorrow and worry."

from everything. Satan replied that this was because the deprivation related to wealth and children and he was patient in their loss; however, he will only be convinced if Job (sws) is inflicted with great bodily harm and he still shows such devotion in worship. So after this, Job's body was afflicted with such harms that one shudders if one reads their details in the Bible. Yet in spite of this, he turned towards God in even greater devotion and he defeated Satan even in this trial. After this defeat of Satan, the Almighty blessed Job (sws) which much more than was taken away from him.

I have referred to these details from the Bible so that the right aspect of the words أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَ عَذَابٍ of Job (sws) is understood and that is the extent of afflictions he had to bear from Satan to prove that he was faithful to God and the immense struggle he had launched against Satan.

The word نُصْبٍ means "tiredness, sorrow and mishap" and the word عَذَابٍ refers to body ailments which took the shape of various diseases. Both these words embrace all harms with which Job (sws) was afflicted.

ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ (٤٢)[35]

The Almighty does not try a person beyond a certain limit. Thus as soon as Job's trial was over, his supplication was accepted without delay. He was told to go to a certain place and strike it with his foot; at this, a spring would sprout whose water would be cold for his bathing as well as for drinking. This was the cure suggested to him for the skin diseases he had been afflicted with as a result of which he would sit in a heap of ashes and rub his body with blocks of clay.

Sprouting of a spring by the striking of a foot is not an improbable thing. On canal and rivulet banks, the water bed is close to the surface of high grounds. A little digging by the hand or the foot makes the water immediately gush forth from the surface. It was such a stream which the Almighty made a cure for Job (sws).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكْرَى لِأُوْلِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٤٣)[36]

After delivering Job (sws) from his bodily afflictions, the Almighty restored his family back to him and with them a majesty and grace of

35. We said to him: "Stamp your feet upon the earth; this water is cool for bathing and for drinking also."

36. And We blessed him with his wife and children and like them more with them: To bless them from Ourself and to remind the prudent.

equal magnitude including an army of servants and slaves. During this period of trial, some of his family and kin were lost and some died. His servants and slaves were also devastated. Once the time of his trial was complete, relatives who had been separated from him were brought back to him and those who died were substituted by God by better ones. Also besides wealth, his servants and slaves were also restored to him.

The words رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكْرَى لِأُوْلِي الْأَلْبَابِ show that God did all this because He wanted to bless one of his upright and noble and also because this dealing of God becomes a reminder for men of understanding. This latter has many aspects of reminding. For example:

– God puts to test the obedience of His servants and only those succeed in his eyes who succeed in this test.

– There is a limit set for this test in the eyes of God which is never exceeded.

– Penitence towards God is a real means of success.

وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا فَاضْرِب بِّهِ وَلَا تَحْنَثْ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٤٤)[37]

It seems that during this period of trial, some thought passed the mind of Job (sws) which was against patience and penitence. It is on this thought that he decided on oath to punish himself by inflicting a certain amount of lashes and did not determine their amount. Though this promise of Job (sws) was a result of his humility to and love for God but it is not allowed for people to put themselves through undue difficulty even though the purpose is to please God. For this reason, God has absolved them of fulfilling such responsibilities. However, since the matter of swearing an oath has great significance and on it rests promises and words given, Job (sws) was directed to take some twigs equal to the no of lashes he had sworn to hit himself with and strike himself with their bunch so that the oath he had sworn is not broken and is fulfilled it its ceremonial sense.

Islam prescribes the fulfillment of a directive in a symbolic manner if it cannot be fulfilled in its actual manner. It is on this basis that a person can do dry ablution (*tayammum*) if water is not available, and can restrict himself to gestures if he cannot kneel and prostrate in the prayer. Job (sws) could have been directed to give atonement but at that time he was neither in a position to atone physically nor financially. He had been

37. "And take a bunch of twigs and strike yourself with it and do not break your oath." We found him full of patience. A good person! Indeed, he was very penitent.

totally deprived of wealth and sickness had totally debilitated him so much that he could not even fast. It was because of this situation that the Almighty showed lenience to him.

Our exegetes have generally understood that he had sworn to administer a hundred lashes to his wife but the Qur'ān has not referred to this at all anywhere and concomitant indications are also against this interpretation. This is because it is evident from various narratives that in his times of trial, the only person who day and night served and attended to Job (sws) was his wife. It is beyond reason to punish such a faithful wife.

Our jurists have tried to deduce the allowance of legal subterfuge from this incident. This is a topic that needs independent treatment. God willing, I shall deal with it at length at an appropriate place. Here I would like to confine the discussion to the context of the verse only.

It is evident from the words إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا that the latent thought on which he had sworn the afore-mentioned oath related to Satan trying to test his patience but did not succeed and Job (sws) showed exemplary patience.

Consider next the last part of the verse: نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ. Exactly the same words have been mentioned by the Qur'ān to praise Solomon (sws). This sheds light on the harmony between all the incidents. Also becomes evident the reality that to become a good person in the sight of God does not mean that sinful thoughts should not cross a person's mind; what is needed is that a person turns to God as soon as he realizes his folly and then perseveres on the truth.

وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُوْلِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ (٤٥) إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُم بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (٤٦) وَإِنَّهُمْ عِندَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٧)[38]

These verses are a reminder of Abraham (sws), Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws). They are the actual proponents of the guidance from among the Israelites. They were invested with patriarchal authority and spiritual insight also. That is why they are called أُوْلِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ which means that God had blessed them with both power and insight. If a person does not have insight with power, he becomes a dangerous animal. It is further said that the Almighty deputed them on the special mission of reminding

38. And recall Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were men of might and vision. For a special mission – reminding of the Hereafter – We had deputed them. And they are with us among chose and noble people.

people of the Hereafter, and they were among His noble and chosen ones.

The word ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ is a permutative (*badal*) of خالِصَة, and the word الدَّار (abode) denotes the abode of the Hereafter because it is the real abode; this world is a temporary resting place. The real mission of the prophets of God is reminding of the Hereafter because it is this reminding which is the key to all success. If he becomes oblivious of the Hereafter, he consigns his reins to Satan, and if he remains mindful of it, then in spite of blemishes he remains on the right path.

وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِّنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٨)[39]

The prophet Dhū al-Kifl has already been mentioned earlier in Sūrah Anbiyā' verse eighty five. There he was mentioned with Ishmael (sws) and Idrīs (sws) and the common trait of all these prophets was patience. Here instead of Idrīs (sws), al-Yasa' is mentioned. There are two prophets in the Bible who have a similar name. One is Isaiah (eighth century BC) and the other is Elisha (ninth century BC).[40] I have already presented my opinion about Dhū al-Kifl in Sūrah Anbiyā'. The context in which this verse occurs is also a mention of patience. This trait is common to all prophets of God; however, the ones mentioned hold a distinction in this trait.

هَذَا ذِكْرٌ وَإِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٩)[41]

This verse summarizes the whole discussion once the accounts of the afore-mentioned prophets have been described. It is stated that this is a reminder. In other words, these are not merely tales of the past; they contain many lessons and advice. It should also be borne in mind that success with God lies for those who fear Him; for those who show arrogance on listening to the advice of the counsel-laden Book of God and then reject it is disgrace and humiliation. In order to understand the sequence of the discourse, readers may take a look at the first verse of the *sūrah*.

جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ مُّفَتَّحَةً لَّهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ (٥٠) مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ

39. And recall Ishmael, al-Yasa', and Dhū al-Kifl. Each of them is among the best.

40. The periods stated by the author in which these prophets lived are incorrect and have been corrected here. (*Translator*)

41. This is a reminder and indeed for the God-fearing there is a good abode:

(٥١) وَعِندَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ أَتْرَابٌ (٥٢) هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٥٣) إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِن نَّفَادٍ (٥٤)[42]

This is a description of the "best abode" referred to by the Qur'ān in the previous verse by the words: حُسْنَ مَآبٍ. It is said that there will be gardens of Eden for them whose gates would have already been opened for them. This is similar to the opening of doors while waiting for the arrival of a respected guest. Thus the keepers of Paradise would be waiting to welcome them in.

The word شَرَابٌ refers to "drinks". The dwellers of Paradise will recline on thrones and would be asking for all kinds of fruits and drinks from the attendants of Paradise.

The expression قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ refers to beautiful women who are bashful and chaste. In Arabia and at all other places of the world, this trait is considered to be the greatest quality of a woman among civilized and cultured people. The word أَتْرَابٌ means "of the same age". In other words, as completion of favour on them, they will be provided with bashful women of the same age.

The verses هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٥٣) إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِن نَّفَادٍ (٥٤) allude to the fact that after these favours are bestowed on the dwellers of Paradise, it shall be said to them that the favours they had been promised for this Day are now in their presence; God has fulfilled His promise; whatever, these people have received will continue to increase and there shall be no fear that these favours will end.

هَذَا وَإِنَّ لِلطَّاغِينَ لَشَرَّ مَآبٍ (٥٥)[43]

The verse implies that while on the one hand there will be favours and beautiful women, on the other hand there will be an evil abode for the arrogant and the rebellious. The arrogant refer to the people who are mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah* by the words: بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ. In other words, they are the ones who instead of inclining

42. The gardens of Eden, whose gates shall be opened to them. They shall recline in them and would demand many fruits and drinks there. And with them will be bashful houris of the same age. This is the thing for which you would be given glad tidings for the Day of Accountability. This is our sustenance which will never finish.

43. This is on the one hand, and [on the other] for the rebellious there is a very bad abode:

themselves towards God after being reminded make fun of it and dispute with God's messenger.

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٥٦)[44]

This a description of the "evil abode" mentioned in the previous verse. The word يَصْلَوْنَهَا refers to the fact that it is not that they will have a glimpse of Hell from far off; they will be admitted into it. And what an evil abode it is in which they will enter.

هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَغَسَّاقٌ (٥٧) وَآخَرُ مِن شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ (٥٨)[45]

The word حَمِيمٌ refers to boiling water, and غَسَّاقٌ means "puss". The first verse states that they will be gestured to taste these things. Next, after mentioning two detestable things it is stated that they there will various other detestable things as well that are not worthy of mention. It may be noted that these things will be provided as the "first feast" (*nuzul*). The real punishment will start later.

هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ (٥٩)[46]

The word الطَّاغِينَ used in verse fifty five testifies that the reference is to the active and die-hard adversaries among the disbelievers. Now in this verse it is being said that groups of their followers will be brought before them and they will be told that that these followers too will enter Hell with them. The leaders will immediately reply: At last! They [the followers] too ended up in Hell.

قَالُوا بَلْ أَنتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ أَنتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوهُ لَنَا فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ (٦٠)[47]

The followers will angrily curse their leaders who led them to this fate. It needs to be kept in mind that the *mubtadā'* (inchoative) has been repeated and the second occurrence is separated from the first by a parenthetical sentence. This style reflects anger of the speaker on every

44. They shall enter Hell. What an evil place it is!

45. Here is scalding water and pus. Thus these people should taste them and there will be other things as well of similar sort.

46. This group is also set to enter Hell with you. The curse of God be on them. They are to enter Hell.

47. They will reply: "In fact, Curse of God be on you. You were responsible for what has happened to us." Thus, what an evil abode it will be!

word uttered. The words فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ will be said longingly from their mouths implying what a dreadful fate they were responsible of taking these followers to. These words can also be interpreted to be spoken by God as an overall comment. In both cases, the meaning would not be much different.

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَن قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ (٦١)[48]

After this, the followers will pray to God to give two-fold punishment to those who were responsible for bringing them to doom and brought them to this destination by leading them astray.

وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُم مِّنَ الْأَشْرَارِ (٦٢) أَتَّخَذْنَاهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا أَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمُ الْأَبْصَارُ (٦٣)[49]

Subsequently, a question that will arise among them will be about the whereabouts of people whom they counted as miscreants – who were enemies of their ancestral religion, who showed disrespect to their deities and who tried to dismember their national unity. They will further contemplate whether they made fun of these people merely and regarded them as those who create disorder merely as a prank even though they were among the righteous or is that they too are present there but cannot be seen. This question will probably be posed by those people in this world who knew that the Muslims whom their leaders were condemning and harassing were noble souls yet because these people were over-awed by their leaders they did not have the guts to say what they thought as the truth with regard to these Muslims.

إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ (٦٤)[50]

The antecedent of ذَلِكَ is تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ. The word تَخَاصُمُ means "mutual debate and quarrel". The verse states that the debate and quarrel between the dwellers of Paradise which has been mentioned above is a certain event and should not be thought of as something hypothetical. Today

48. And they will say: "Lord, inflict on those who brought this fate upon us a twofold punishment in Hell."

49. And they will say: "What is the matter! We are not able to see those whom we used to regard as miscreants. Did we make them a mere joke or is it that our eyes missing are them?"

50. Indeed, this bickering between the companions of Hell is a certain event.

those who in their opposition to the truth have become leaders and followers of one another should contemplate whatever they do keeping in mind this fate.

Section V (Verses 65-88)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. Initially, the Prophet (sws) is asked to declare that he is a warner and that he is informing people of a horrible day; when that day arrives, no one except God, the one and only, will be able to benefit people; the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was to warn people of that day which he has; it was not his responsibility to make people accept faith forcibly; people who are disputing with him out of arrogance and haughtiness should bear in mind that this is not the way of the prophets of God and the righteous; it is, in fact, the way of Satan and his followers and they will face the very fate which the Almighty had ordained for them in the very beginning.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٦٥) رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٦٦) قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٧) أَنتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ (٦٨) مَا كَانَ لِيَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَىٰ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٦٩) إِن يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٠) إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِن طِينٍ (٧١) فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (٧٢) فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ (٧٣) إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنْ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤) قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَن تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ (٧٥) قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ (٧٦) قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (٧٧) وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٧٨) قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (٧٩) قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (٨٠) إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (٨١) قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٢) إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٨٣) قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقَّ أَقُولُ (٨٤) لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٥) قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ (٨٦) إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧) وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ (٨٨)

Say: "I am only an informer and there is no god except God, the One, the Mighty. He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all that is

between them; the Dominant and the Forgiving." Say: "That is a great news; you are evading it." (65-68)

I had no knowledge of the *malā-i a'lā* when they must have been fighting. It is only because I am an open warner that revelations are sent down to me. (69-70)

Bear in mind when your Lord said to the angels: "I am creating a human from clay. Then when I have fashioned him and have breathed My spirit into him, prostrate yourselves before him." So, all the angels prostrated themselves before him except Satan. He showed arrogance and became among the disbelievers. "Satan!" said He, 'What stopped you from prostrating before that which I created from My own hands? Are you too proud, or do you deem yourself superior?" Satan replied: "I am superior to him. You created me from fire and him from clay."[51] God ordered: "Be gone because you are accursed! And My curse shall remain on you until the Day of Reckoning." He replied: 'Lord! Give me respite till the Day people will be raised to life." He said: "Respite has been granted to you till a prescribed time." "I swear by Your glory,' said Satan, 'that I will lead them all astray except your servants who you have selected." God replied: "This is the truth then and I speak nothing but the truth that I will surely fill Hell with you and all among those who are your followers." (71-85)

Say: "Neither do I demand any recompense from you nor am I among those who pretend. This is only a reminder to mankind; and before long you shall know of the news it has given." (86-88)

Explanation

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٦٥)[52]

The Almighty in this verse is directing the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) to tell his addressees that he is one who is forewarning them of what is to come; he has no further obligation in this regard; if they persist with their stubbornness, they will see its consequences. If they, on the basis of intercession of other deities have become indifferent to that day, then they should clearly listen up that except for God Almighty there is no God. The word قَهَّارُ has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. It means One who controls everything. In other words, all His creation is under His control; He is not someone helpless so that He may

51. The author has missed translating a part of this verse. I have translated it keeping in view his *tafsīr* of this verse. (*Translator*)

52. Say: "I am only an informer and there is no god except God, the One, the Mighty.

require the help of other deities in order to maintain His sovereignty.

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٦٦)[53]

This verse explains the attribute قَهَّارُ. He alone is the master of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He is also الْعَزِيزُ and الْغَفَّارُ. The former attribute means that He is dominant and powerful; no one can dare escape His grasp. At the same time, another attribute of God is that He is غَفَّارُ. Hence those who are worthy of His forgiveness and mercy will find Him ever-disposed to mercy; there is not the slightest fear of any injustice or oppression from Him so that deities of the disbelievers would be needed to redress this situation.

قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٧) أَنتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ (٦٨)[54]

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to tell his addressees that what he is warning them of is not something ordinary; it is a very significant event; however, these addresses are not paying heed to this event and making fun of his warnings.

مَا كَانَ لِيَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَى إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٦٩) إِن يُوحَى إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٠)[55]

These verses convey to the Prophet's addressees through his tongue that they should not think that he is bluffing them by calling himself an open warner and in order to over-awe them is narrating to them the altercation of the companions of Hell. How could he have knowledge of that unseen world? It is only that God is informing him through divine revelation that he should forewarn them of the horrors of this day the way open warners do; otherwise he is not someone who has knowledge of God's domain; he is merely warning them in a clear manner. I have explained the term نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ at an appropriate instance of this *tafsīr*. Here the implication is that God has informed the Prophet of events hidden in the veil of future so that he can warn his addressees in such a manner as if he is witnessing these events.

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53. He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; the Dominant and the Forgiving."

54. Say: "That is a great news; you are evading it."

55. I had no knowledge of the *malā-i a'lā* when they must have been fighting. It is only because I am an open warner that revelations are sent down to me.

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِن طِينٍ (٧١) فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (٧٢) فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ (٧٣) إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنْ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤)[56]

These verses portray the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan that has been mentioned in parts in various earlier *sūrahs* and I have tried to explain its various aspects at these instances. In Sūrah Baqarah specially, this incident has been explained in great detail. Here this incident is referred to relate the arrogance mentioned in first verse of this *sūrah* to its origins – the arrogance which is severely criticized in the whole *sūrah*. In other words, the Quraysh are shown the mirror that the arrogance and haughtiness which have overcome them and as a result of which they are rejecting the call of the Qur'ān is what they have inherited from Satan and not from the righteous. It was this arrogance which led Satan to not prostrate before Adam (sws) and become among the accursed. In other words, if the Quraysh want to revive the practice of Satan, they should also get ready to face the consequences which the followers of Satan are destined to face.

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَن تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ (٧٥)[57]

While scolding Satan for not prostrating before Adam (sws), the Almighty has asked him what made him do this when Adam (sws) was someone He created specially from His hands; was it his arrogance or was it because he considers himself to be a superior being. The expression خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ refers to the elaborate and special manner in which God created Adam (sws). A human being is the magnum opus of God with regard to his abilities. If he rightly uses these abilities he can even cross the angels what to speak of subjugating the jinn. All the universe is put to man's service yet he himself is subservient to God only. In other words, the question posed is: What made Satan deny God's directive to prostrate before Adam (sws) – someone who was

56. Bear in mind when your Lord said to the angels: "I am creating a human from clay. Then when I have fashioned him and have breathed My spirit into him, prostrate yourselves before him." So, all the angels prostrated themselves before him except Satan. He showed arrogance and became among the disbelievers.

57. "Satan!" said He, 'What stopped you from prostrating before that which I created from My own hands? Are you too proud, or do you deem yourself superior?"

created by God in such a masterful way? The real importance in this regard is the abilities which man has and not the substance he is made of. If God has created a masterful species from a clod of clay, then should this species not be acknowledged merely because it is made of clay?

The second verse addresses Satan and asks him if this hideous act of his is because of his unbridled arrogance or because he regards himself to be someone superior.

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ (٧٦)[58]

Satan's reply to the question posed by the Almighty was that he regarded himself to be superior and the reason for this was that he has been created from fire and human beings are made from clay. In other words, he claimed superiority and the basis of this was the superior substance from which he was created. Satan, it can be seen, bases his superiority not any ability but on his lineage. This is the same logic which the leaders of the Quraysh would use against the Prophet, as is referred to earlier in this *sūrah*: they would contend that if the Almighty needed to reveal a Book, He should have revealed it to someone among them and not to someone so modest as Muḥammad (sws) whose companions too were poor and needy like him.

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (٧٧) وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٧٨)[59]

The antecedent of the pronoun in مِنْهَـا is Paradise because as is evident from other verses of the Qur'ān it is there that the whole incident of Adam (sws) and Satan took place. After Satan's rebelliousness, the Almighty regarded him as accursed and asked him to leave the place and told him that this curse will be on him till the Day of Judgement; he was told that on that Day will he endure the punishment of what he did.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (٧٩) قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (٨٠) إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (٨١)[60]

After being accursed by the Almighty, Satan thought that his respite in

58. Satan replied: "I am superior to him. You created me from fire and him from clay."

59. God ordered: "Be gone because you are accursed! And My curse shall remain on you until the Day of Reckoning."

60. He replied: 'Lord! Give me respite till the Day people will be raised to life." He said: "Respite has been granted to you till a prescribed time."

which he could further his plans is being terminated, and that he will not be given any chance to inveigle human beings. Hence, he requested the Almighty to grant him respite till the day when people are raised up for their accountability. His request was accepted by the Almighty and he was given this respite.

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٢) إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٨٣)[61]

When he was granted this respite, Satan arrogantly stated by swearing an oath on God's honour that he would lead all his creation astray and except all those whom the Almighty had selected for His servitude he would lure the rest into his deceptive schemes; he contended that by doing this he would prove that man whom the Almighty regarded as worthy of honour and respect does not in any way deserve this honour and respect and that he was right when he did not prostrate before him.

قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقَّ أَقُولُ (٨٤) لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٥)[62]

The challenge thrown by Satan had a lot of arrogance in it. The Almighty responded to this challenge with full majesty and absolute condescension. He told Satan that if he would lead everyone astray, then Satan should hear out these true words of God and He always states the truth that He will fill the belly of Hell with Satan and his followers.

This whole incident is related to the leaders of the Quraysh and their blind followers so that if their eyes have insight and ears can really hear, they can see and hear their fate in this anecdote.

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ (٨٦) إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧) وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ (٨٨)[63]

Here at the end it has been proclaimed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that if he is reciting the Qur'ān before his addressees, then they should realize that this is not to seek any reward from them so that he will be deprived of it if they do not give due importance to the

61. "I swear by Your glory,' said Satan, 'that I will lead them all astray except your servants who you have selected."

62. God replied: "This is the truth then and I speak nothing but the truth that I will surely fill Hell with you and all among those who are your followers."

63. Say: "Neither do I demand any recompense from you nor am I among those who pretend. This is only a reminder to mankind; and before long you shall know of the news it has given."

Qur'ān; he has not borne this heavy burden out of his own will; it is in fact a responsibility that God has imposed on him and hence it is God with whom rests his reward; as a result, it is God Who will help and guide him in fulfilling this responsibility; if they reject it, they should remember that this is a great reminder from God for the people of the world. The events it is informing them of will soon manifest themselves before his addressees.

By the grace of God, the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* stands completed with these lines. وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانا أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (and our final statement is that gratitude be to God, the Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābād
21st May 1975 AD

Surah Zumar

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the preceding Sūrah Ṣu‘ād. It begins with the subject on which the last *sūrah* ended. It is mentioned in Sūrah Ṣu‘ād that this Qur’ān is a great reminder for the people of this world; it is reminding people that the Day of Judgement is certain to come; every one will have to face their real Lord on that Day; so those who are denying it today will very soon observe its veracity from their very eyes. Sūrah Ṣu‘ād begins with this very topic that the Almighty has revealed this Book in a thorough and elaborate way so that it can give its verdict on the differences which people have created about *tawḥīd* (monotheism); as a consequence, the truth will become evident and those who because of their supposed deities have no fear of the Hereafter are afforded with an opportunity to reflect on their fate before it is too late. With respect to this premise, the *sūrah* mentions the arguments in support of *tawḥīd* and also refutes polytheism and false deities and portrays the dreadful fate which the Idolaters will meet in the Hereafter. The *sūrah* is based on *tawḥīd*, and the Day of Judgement is mentioneddue its relationship with *tawḥīd*. This *sūrah* is among those *sūrahs* of this group that were revealed in that period when the signs of migration to Madīnah had come to the fore. Thus, this subject gradually becomes prominent in the later *sūrahs.*

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-4): The all-knowing and wise God has revealed this Book as a final verdict to once and for all end the debate between monotheism and polytheism. So people should worship and obey Him only. He alone is worthy of worship and obedience. If people who have set up other deities to procure the nearness of God are not professing faith in it, then God will decide their fate on the Day of Judgement and they should remember that God will not let liars and ingrates succeed on that Day. God is far exalted to have sons and daughters. He is the one and only and is enough to control the whole of the universe.

Verses (5-8): God has created this world with a purpose and there is wisdom behind it. It is at His behest that alternation of night and day and

movements of the sun and the moon take place. It is He Who has created man and it is He Who has created the means for His nourishment. If He is the sole creator and Lord and He alone has knowledge of all the affairs of His universe and is its Master, then where are people wandering about running away from Him. People should remember that God is not in need of their worship and gratitude; in fact, they themselves are in need of Him; everyone is destined to return to God; on that Day, no one will bear the burden of any other person; the Almighty is fully aware of all the secrets and He will reveal each and every deed a person did before him. When people are afflicted with some hardship, they beseech God and when He delivers them of this hardship they totally ignore Him as if they never had any relation with Him.

Verses (9-21): Glad tidings of success are given to God's servants who are being oppressed by the miscreants of their nation merely because they had professed in *tawḥīd*. They are urged to adhere to their faith. If it becomes difficult for them to live in this land, then the land of God is spacious enough for them. He abundantly rewards those who remain steadfast in His cause. After this, a declaration of acquittal is sounded from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to polytheism and polytheists. The latter are warned of punishment and glad tidings are given to those who adhere to the *tawḥīd*. Finally, people who are denying the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) because of arrogance are warned. The source of their arrogance is their worldly affluence.

Verses (22-35): The Prophet (sws) is assured that only those people will profess faith in this Qur'ān whose nature is alive; people who hearts are hardened will not profess faith in it. They will reach the fate which is met by nations that are destroyed for denying their respective messenger. The Qur'ān has fully explained in detail the reality of monotheism and polytheism; Hell is the abode of people who still show stubbornness.

Verses (36-52): The Prophet is given assurance that if these people are striking fear of their deities in him, he should tell them that God is sufficient for his protection; no one can deprive him of God's mercy if it has been ordained from Him, and if God wants to harm him in any way, then no one can save him; hence, they should do what they want and he will do what he wants; the decision rests with God.

It is explained that life and death is fully under God's authority; so the Prophet (sws) should tell those who are banking upon the wrong notion of intercession that intercession too is in under God's control. He is directed to consign the matter of such people to God and is also advised to pray for them.

The actual reason of arrogance of the arrogant is referred to: they think that the wealth and status which God has bestowed upon them is the

result of their own planning; before them also were people who were afflicted with this infatuation. When they were seized with God, their planning could be of no avail to them. Wealth and sustenance is a gift of God. Hence thanking Him is imperative on every one and this is what *tawḥīd* entails.

Verses (53-61): People are reminded of the fact that losing hope in God and seeking other deities and intercessors is not the correct way. They should, in fact, turn to Him in all circumstances. He is very forgiving and merciful. Hence before He seizes them, people should turn to Him and profess faith in this magnificent Book which the Almighty has revealed for their guidance. Otherwise, a day will come when they will yearn to profess faith and severely regret their deprivation. However, this shall be of no avail to them because the time for professing faith would have passed.

Verses (62-75): This is the closing section of the *sūrah* in which it is first explained that only God is worthy of worship; He alone is the Creator of everything and the keys of the heavens and the earth are in His jurisdiction. After this the Idolaters are addressed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) and told that they ask him to worship other deities even though it has been divinely revealed to him and to other prophets before him that the deeds of people who set up partners with God will come to nothing. After this, the Idolaters are rebuked that they did not recognize the majesty of God; they live on the intercession of false deities. The fact is that when the trumpet is sounded everyone will fall down unconscious. And when the trumpet is sounded again everyone will rise up; the earth shall become radiant with the light of God; the register shall be opened; prophets and witnesses will be called forth and judgement will be passed between people with full fairness. After this, the details of the circumstances of the dwellers of Hell and Paradise are depicted.

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Section I: Verses (1-8)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

تَنزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١) إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ (٢) أَلَا لِلهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللهِ زُلْفَى إِنَّ اللهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ (٣) لَوْ أَرَادَ اللهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَّاصْطَفَى مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاء سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ اللهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٤) خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٥) خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِن بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ذَلِكُمُ اللهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ (٦) إِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَى لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِن تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٧) وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِن قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلهِ أَندَادًا لِّيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ (٨)

This book is revealed in a thorough manner by God, the Mighty, the Wise One. Indeed, We have revealed to you this Book with the decisive truth; so worship God alone with sincere obedience to Him only. Remember that only He is worthy of sincere obedience. Those who have set up other protectors besides Him, say: "We worship them only so that they may bring us nearer to God." God will resolve the issues on which they are differing. God will not let liars and ungrateful to succeed. (1-3)

Had it been God's intention to create children, He would have chosen whom He pleased out of His own Creation. God is exalted and lofty; He is God, the One, the Almighty. (4)

He created the heavens and the earth with a purpose. He causes the night to cover the day and the day to cover the night, and He has made the sun and the moon obedient to Him, each punctually following a path. Listen up! He alone is the Mighty, the Forgiving One. (5)

It is He Who created you from a single soul, then from its genre created its pair and sent down for you eight different kinds of cattle

[both male and female]. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, one stage after the other in threefold darkness. Such is God, your Lord. To Him belongs the sovereignty. There is no god but Him. So where are you made to wander away? (6)

If you show ingratitude, God does not need you. Yet the ingratitude of His servants does not please Him. And if you are grateful to Him, this will please Him. And no soul shall bear another's burden. Then to your Lord shall you return; so He will inform you what you have been doing. He also knows the secrets of the chests. (7)

And when some calamity befalls man, he pleads to his Lord turning to Him in penitence; yet when He bestows on him His favour, he forgets what he had been pleading for and makes other deities God's equals in order to lead men away from His path. Say: "Enjoy your disbelief awhile; you will soon become the companions of Hell." (8)

Explanation

تَنزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١)[1]

I have explained the word تَنزِيلُ at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr* and pointed out that this word does not merely mean "to reveal"; it, in fact, means "to reveal in an elaborate manner and with thoroughness." This introductory verse is meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and warn the rejecters of the Qur'ān. The assurance meant for the Prophet (sws) is that he has not authored this Book nor requested God to reveal it to him; on the contrary, the Almighty Himself has revealed it to him gradually and is still revealing it to him in this piecemeal manner; so he should rest assured that He Himself will prove its veracity before others and pave the way for this; the God Who has revealed it to him is not a helpless being. He is powerful and dominant; He can do anything He intends to; no one can impede His intention to materialize; however, together with عَزِيْزٌ He is also حَكِيْمٌ; hence, if the Prophet (sws) is facing hardships in the cause of God or may face them in future, then He should deem that there is some wisdom in this scheme; nothing happens without His directive and all His actions are based on prudence and wisdom.

The warning sounded to the rejecters is that this Book has been revealed with God in a gradual and thorough manner for the guidance of people; this entails certain obligations towards it: people should give it due importance and receive the light of guidance from it; if they adopt a contrary attitude, then they should remember that this is not the petition

1. This book is revealed in a thorough manner by God, the Mighty, the Wise One.

of a pleader; it is the ordinance of God that has to be obeyed at all cost; He can do anything He wants; if in spite of this, He is giving respite to the rejecters, it is only because His wisdom requires this.

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ (٢) أَلَا لِلهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللهِ زُلْفَى إِنَّ اللهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ (٣)[2]

The word حَقٌّ here means "decisive word" and the word دِينٌ here means "obedience".

These verses address the Prophet (sws) and tell him that this Book has been revealed to him as a decisive word. It has given its verdict regarding the differences which have created by the innovators and the polytheists in the concept of *tawḥīd*. This verdict is that the Prophet (sws) should only worship God with sincere obedience to Him. It is only He Who is worthy of sincere obedience. He is the creator and Lord of everyone; He only He deserves to be worshipped and He who only deserves to be worshipped should only be shown obedience to. It is totally illogical that the one worshipped should be different to the one shown obedience too. Just as it is essential that worship be sincere and unadulterated, it is also essential that obedience be sincere and unadulterated. It is not permissible to obey someone in defiance to God.

The reason that the Prophet (sws) is addressed here is that after the revelation of this Book his path has been determined; he should tread on it only; if others accompany him, it is well and good other he should leave them alone; he is not responsible for them.

The words وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللهِ زُلْفَى إِنَّ اللهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ point to the fact that if there are some people who are not accepting the judgement of this Book, then the Almighty will pass His judgment on them on the Day of Judgement. The reference is to people who have set up partners with God and have invented this philosophical belief about them that they are not worshipping them by regarding them to be God; they are only worshipping them because they are a means to procure God's nearness.

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2. Indeed, We have revealed to you this Book with the decisive truth; so worship God alone with sincere obedience to Him only. Remember that only He is worthy of sincere obedience. Those who have set up other protectors besides Him, say: "We worship them only so that they may bring us nearer to God." God will resolve the issues on which they are differing. God will not let liars and ungrateful to succeed.

Consider next the part: إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ. The verb يَهْدِي is also used in the Qur'ān at many places to connote making someone succeed in his objective. I have explained this at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

A principle statement is given regarding the judgement that will be passed about these people on the Day of Judgement: the Almighty will not make liars and ingrates succeed. The liars here refer to those who forged this lie on God that He has made such and such His partners even though the Almighty has not revealed any such testimony in their matter. The ingrates referred to here are the ones who received all their favours and gifts from God yet they thanked others instead of God for them. Both these attributes are of the polytheists and are necessarily found in every polytheist. The verse says that these people are denying the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) on the basis of the conceited notion that if ever the Day of Judgement comes, they will procure the nearness of God through their deities; the fact is that no hope of such liars and ingrates will materialize with God.

لَوْ أَرَادَ اللهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَّاصْطَفَى مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاء سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ اللهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٤)[3]

This verse insinuates at a belief of the polytheists: they worship the angels after regarding them to be daughters of God and think that they are a means of winning favour with God; these foolish people have not even cared to think that if God wanted to produce children for Himself why would He have created daughters; He would have selected the best of His creations for this purpose. The word سُبْحَانَهُ refers to the fact that He is exalted and beyond such ascriptions and needs. He does not need a son or a daughter or any partner or helper. He is sole and singular and has the power to fully control the affairs of this universe.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٥)[4]

God has not created the heavens and earth without a purpose. Hence it

3. Had it been God's intention to create children, He would have chosen whom He pleased out of His own Creation. God is exalted and lofty; He is God, the One, the Almighty.

4. He created the heavens and the earth with a purpose. He causes the night to cover the day and the day to cover the night, and He has made the sun and the moon obedient to Him, each punctually following a path. Listen up! He alone is the Mighty, the Forgiving One.

is not possible that vice and virtue, falsehood and truth not be dealt with separately nor is it possible that a person whatever his beliefs and deeds may be secure for himself high status before God on the basis of some intercessors. If this were so, then this world becomes a meaningless place, and it is beyond the majesty of a wise and a just creator to do meaningless things.

The words يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى imply that no one should remain in the misconception that after the creating the world, the Almighty became a mere spectator to its affairs or is aloof from its affairs; the fact is that it is He alone Who covers the day by the night and covers the night by the day; it is He Who has put the sun and the moon in the service of man and all the heavenly bodies move in their orbit according to a systematically prescribed time-table. Nothing can dare deviate from this time-table for a second.

The words أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ ask the people to listen up: God is powerful (عَزِيزُ) as well as very forgiving (غَفَّارُ). Since He is powerful, no one can have access to Him without His permission nor intercede for someone. Since He is very forgiving, He will Himself forgive people who become worthy of forgiveness; they will not require the services of any intercessor.

خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِن بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ذَلِكُمُ اللهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ (٦)[5]

This verse further explains what is said in the previous one: when God is the Creator and He alone has set up this whole system of providence for His creatures and only He has knowledge of each and every thing, then on what basis can some other being become the Lord. Why do people who acknowledge all these obvious facts lose their senses by imputing partners to Him?

The words خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا imply that it is God Who has created every one from a single soul, and then created its mate from the same species. All humanity is born of Adam (sws) and the

5. It is He Who created you from a single soul, then from its genre created its pair and sent down for you eight different kinds of cattle [both male and female]. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, one stage after the other in threefold darkness. Such is God, your Lord. To Him belongs the sovereignty. There is no god but Him. So where are you made to wander away?

Creator of all humanity is the Almighty. Moreover, it is God Who created Adam's mate from his species. When the Creator of everyone is God and no one denies this fact, then from where does the provision of other deities arise?

The words وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ refer to the fact that the Almighty Who has created man also made arrangements for his nourishment and sustenance. It was not that after creating him, He made some others responsible for this task. All these cattle on which depends their livelihood and economy have been created by Him and no one else.

Here the words أَنزَلَ لَكُم (He sent down for you) are used in the way the words أَنزَلْنَا الحَدِيْد (We sent down iron) are used in Sūrah Ḥadīd (57:25). This style is employed by the Qur'ān for many objects and the purpose is to direct the attention of people to the real source: it is God Who sends down all things. He sent down iron and as a result it was produced in the earth and from it man was able to invent various types of armour. Similarly, He sent down the cattle and as a result they spread in the earth to fulfill the economic needs of man. It is this perception of reality which inculcates true gratitude in man otherwise man's observation is often entangled in the immediate cause and source of things, and he forgets his real Lord.

Consider next the expression: ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ. The word زَوْجٌ (singular of أَزْوَاجٍ) refers to a pair as well as to the individual member of a pair. Here, it is used in this latter meaning. In Arabia, four types of domestic cattle were very common; among the smaller breeds were goats and lambs and among the larger ones were buffaloes and camels. The word أنعام was used for these animals. If both genders of these species are counted, they come out to be eight. The Arabs mostly depended on these animals for their livelihood. For this reason, the Almighty referred to them while reminding the Arabs here of His providence. If more details are required on this topic, readers may look up my explanation of verses 143-144 of Sūrah An'ām.

After reminding people of God's creativity and His providence the words are meant to remind them of God's power, skill and all embracing knowledge. It is said that it is God Who makes the foetus pass through various phases of creation in the wombs of mothers in three layers darkness. These phases of creation are referred to in the following words in Sūrah Mu'minūn:

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا

الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ (٢٣: ١٤)

Then We make the sperm into a clot of coagulated blood, then We make the clot into a lump of flesh, then We create bones in this lump of flesh. Then We clothe the bones with flesh, and then We bring it forth as another creation. (23:14)

The three layers of darkness refer to the membrane, the womb and the hollow in which the womb is enclosed. The implication is that the skilful hand of God does not demonstrate its creativity in the light of the sun; it does so in within an area covered by three layers. This bears witness that God's knowledge embraces everything.

The words ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّىٰ تُصْرَفُونَ refer to the fact that the God Who has done all these favours on these people is their Lord and Master; He owns everything and to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; none else than Him is worthy of worship; so what then makes them lose their senses and they deviate from the right path and stray into error. Use of the passive verb تُصْرَفُونَ is meant to convey that after these manifest facts there was room for anyone to err, but they have consigned their reigns to some devil who is leading them into darkness and taking them away from the truth.

إِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِن تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٧)[6]

The word تَكْفُرُوا here connotes "ingratitude" and "thanklessness". The word تَشْكُرُوا occurs in contrast to it and as such delineate its meaning. What is implied is that no one has any role in creating man and in nurturing Him; if, in spite of this, people are showing ingratitude to Him by ascribing partners to Him, they should remember that they are in no way harming God. He does not require their gratitude or ingratitude; He does not need them; it is they, on the contrary, who need Him. If they are grateful to Him, He will be pleased with this attitude and will bless them in this world and also richly reward them in the Hereafter. If they

6. If you show ingratitude, God does not need you. Yet the ingratitude of His servants does not please Him. And if you are grateful to Him, this will please Him. And no soul shall bear another's burden. Then to your Lord shall you return; so He will inform you what you have been doing. He also knows the secrets of the chests.

are ungrateful to Him, then they should remember that God does not like this attitude from His servants and they will have to face its consequences.

The words وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ imply that each soul is itself answerable to God; no one will be answerable for any other person. If they think that their deities will intercede for them before God and save them from His wrath then this false hope will never materialize. The Almighty will present the account of each person's deeds before him. He has full knowledge of the secrets found in the hearts of people. Neither does He need to ask a person for any information about another person nor will there be anyone who will add anything to His knowledge about some other person.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِن قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا لِّيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ (٨)[7]

This verse expresses sorrow and wonder on the attitude of ungratefulness of man: strange is his matter; whenever he is afflicted with some hardship, he pleads to God with great humility and devotion; however, as soon as God delivers him of this affliction and blesses Him out of His grace, he forgets this state and ascribes the favours blessed to Him by God to associates of God; in this way, he deviates from the path of God and also causes others to deviate from His path. Here since the attitude of the leaders of the disbelievers is under discussion, hence the transitive verb لِّيُضِلّ is used. It means that they lead others astray; this is inclusive of the fact that they themselves are already astray.

This topic is discussed in the following words ahead:

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ (٣٩: ٤٩)

So when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he calls out to Us. Then We look upon Him with favour from Ourself, he says: "I acquired

7. And when some calamity befalls man, he pleads to his Lord turning to Him in penitence; yet when He bestows on him His favour, he forgets what he had been pleading for and makes other deities God's equals in order to lead men away from His path. Say: "Enjoy your disbelief awhile; you will soon become the companions of Hell."

this through my planning." (39:49)

Human nature is aware of just one God. So whenever a person is in real need, He turns to this God and pleads and invokes Him. However, once a person is relieved of his hardship he forgets it and also becomes indifferent to God. He then ascribes the favour bestowed to him by God to other supposed deities or to his own capability and intelligence and in this way himself becomes a partner to God.

Prior to the words قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ, the address was general; however, since the purpose was to direct attention to the state of those addressed, the Prophet (sws) was directed in the above words to inform them that in spite of their ingratitude and disbelief they shall be given respite so that they can benefit from the favours of God for sometime; eventually, they will become the fuel of Hell and it will punish them fully for all their blunders.

Section II: Verses (9-20)

First, attention is directed at the fact that people who have invented the beliefs of polytheism and intercession have actually equated the righteous with the wrong-doers, even though this is self-evidently wrong. People having vision and understanding and those who are slaves to their desires cannot be equal in the sight of God.

After this, Muslims who at that time were inflicted with all kinds of oppression and injustice are assured and told to persevere on *tawḥīd*; they shall be richly rewarded from God and if it becomes difficult for them to live in their land, then they should rest assured that vast is God's earth.

After this, a vehement declaration of acquittal from polytheism and polytheists is made through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). The purpose is that it becomes evident to the disbelievers that they cannot make God's servants submit to polytheism through coercion and oppression.

At the end, Muslims are given glad tidings of success and assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) that his call will only appeal to men of understanding; it is not his responsibility to guide those who have become the fuel of Hell because of their evil deeds. Readers may study the subsequent verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاء اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي

الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٩) قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللهِ وَاسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (١٠) قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ (١١) وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٢) قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣) قُلِ اللهَ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ دِينِي (١٤) فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١٥) لَهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِن تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللهُ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ فَاتَّقُونِ (١٦) وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَن يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ (١٧) الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللهُ وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (١٨) أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ أَفَأَنتَ تُنقِذُ مَن فِي النَّارِ (١٩) لَكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِّن فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَعْدَ اللهِ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللهُ الْمِيعَادَ (٢٠)

Can he who spends the night humbly kneeling and prostrating before his Lord, who fears the Hereafter and hopes to earn the mercy of his Lord [and others devoid of these traits be equal?] Ask: "Are those who have knowledge and vision equal to those who have none?" Only men of understanding can be reminded. (9)

Say: "O Believers! Fear your Lord. Those who do virtuous deeds in this world shall receive a good reward in the Hereafter. And vast is God's earth. Those who persevere with fortitude shall be recompensed without measure." (10)

Say: "I have been directed to worship God with sincere obedience and I have been directed to be the first Muslim." Say: "I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the torment of a fateful day." (11-13)

Say: "God alone I worship with His sincere obedience; so you may worship others besides Him whom you want." Say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their kinsfolk in loss on the Day of Judgement. Bear in mind that this is the real loss. For them, there shall be sheets of fire from above them and also from beneath them! It is this from which God is warning them of. O My Servants! Thus Fear Me alone." (14-16)

And those who abstained from getting entangled in worshipping al-Tāghūt and remained devoted to God, there are glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants who listen carefully to what is said to them and follow what is the best in it. It is they whom God has guided and it

is they who are men of intellect. (17-18)

He who has become worthy of punishment [and is in Hell], will then you be able to rescue him who is in Hell. However, those who fear their Lord shall be lodged in embellished lofty mansions. Streams will be running below them. This is a certain promise of God. God does not break His promise. (19-20)

Explanation

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاء اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٩)[8]

I have explained at a number of place in this *tafsīr* that a part of the discourse is suppressed in such interrogative sentences that can be revealed from the emphatic words of the speaker. An example of this style can be seen in verse 22 ahead. Such a style testifies to the firm conviction of the speaker, and it is also evident from this that there is no room for any difference of opinion for the addressee in response to this question. Moreover, a part of the discourse becomes evident without even expressing it.

If this interrogative style of the verse is unveiled, then it would mean: Can the one who humbly and obediently spends the night while prostrating before his Lord and while standing and the one who fears the Hereafter and is hopeful of God's mercy be equal to the one who is engrossed in his arrogance and has no fear of the Hereafter nor gives importance to God's mercy?

It automatically emanates from this question that the two cannot be equal, and this is such an obvious reality that the addressee cannot negate it. However, in spite of this, these foolish people by inventing the belief of polytheism and intercession have equated the two. This is because if salvation in the Hereafter depends on the intercession of the deities instead of on faith and righteous deeds, then neither does the fear of God's justice remains nor is there any need for faith and righteous deeds.

After studying the style of the verse and its occasion and context, let us now analyze its components.

The real meaning of قُنُوتٌ is to be humble and modest before God. This is basically a spiritual state the best expression of which is found in the

8. Can he who spends the night humbly kneeling and prostrating before his Lord, who fears the Hereafter and hopes to earn the mercy of his Lord [and others devoid of these traits be equal?] Ask: "Are those who have knowledge and vision equal to those who have none?" Only men of understanding can be reminded.

prayer, especially the night ones. The condition آنَاء اللَّيْلِ has been specially imposed because the night prayer is free of pretence. So the humility of people who diligently adhere to it is beyond doubt.

The words سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا portray the prayer of these people: at times, they are in prostration and at times they are standing. They also express their restlessness and anxiety: when others are in deep slumber in their comfortable beds, these people stand and prostrate in prayer before their Lord to obtain His pleasure.

The words يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ depict the inner state of their prayer: the fear of the Hereafter and hope of God's mercy has made them restless and as such at times they are in prostration and at times standing before their Lord while forsaking their beds.

It should be borne in mind that a person's relationship with God remains balanced as long as it remains between fear and hope. If any of the two becomes dominant, the balance is disturbed. If the element of hope becomes dominant, a person becomes indifferent to God's justice and. This opens the doors to creed of *irjā'*, in fact profanity. If the element of fear becomes dominant, a person loses hope in God and becomes pessimistic; this too breeds many evils. Long is the list of the problems that have arisen among previous nations because of this imbalance. The Qur'ān has alluded to them, and I have been directing the attention of the readers to this.

The words هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ help unveil the suppressed part I have referred to earlier. How is it possible that people of knowledge and people without knowledge become equal in the sight of God? It automatically follows from this that in the eyes of the Qur'ān men of knowledge are the ones who are mentioned by the words: أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاء اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ. Those who are devoid of this traits are, in the view of the Qur'ān, devoid of knowledge even if they are able to travel to the moon and Mars. The reason for this is that the real knowledge needed to be guided in life is that a person knows the origin of this universe and its end as well as the attributes of its Creator and the nature of relationship he has with Him. If he is able to get hold of the key to this matter, he will be able to understand the object and purpose of his life. However, if he is not able to acquaint himself with this knowledge he will wander in the dark even though he may travel to the farthest frontiers of space.

The words إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ point out that the above stated facts are very clear; however, in order to accept something its mere clarity is not sufficient; it is essential that the addressees have intellect and also use

their intellect to listen to and understand these facts. People who are devoid of both knowledge and intellect can never learn a lesson from the clearest of facts. In this regard, the Prophet (sws) is also assured that if these people are not benefitting from the reminders of the Qur'ān, then neither he nor the Qur'ān is at fault; it is these people who are dunces and thick-headed.

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللهِ وَاسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (١٠)[9]

After expressing lack of hope in the attitude of the Quraysh, assurance is sounded to the poor Muslims who were being harassed by the Quraysh. The Prophet (sws) is directed by God to tell His servants to keep fearing their Lord. In other words, the foolish by inventing the beliefs of polytheism and intercession have made God's justice and reward and punishment totally meaningless; however, these servants of God should continue to fear Him. Those who lead a life of piety ad virtue in this world will find a great reward for themselves in the Hereafter. As for those who are living in a fool's Paradise by relying on false intercessions, they will witness the fate of this foolishness.

The words وَأَرْضُ اللهِ وَاسِعَةٌ point to the fact that they should patiently endure the hardships and difficulties they are facing or will face in future from their enemies. They should not lose hope if they see that living in their own country has become impossible for them. Vast is God's earth. If it is not possible for them to practice their religion in this city, then the Almighty will guide them to another land where they will be able to worship God without any fear and danger.

It is evident from this verse that this *sūrah* was revealed in that period of conflict between the proponents of good and evil in which it was becoming difficult for the Muslims of Makkah to live there and they were beginning to contemplate about their future. At that time, the Almighty comforted them that if the inhabitants of this city turn them out, they should rest assured that another land would welcome them. This subject has already been discussed in this very context in Sūrah 'Ankabūt in the following words:

يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ (٢٩: ٥٦)

9. Say: "O Believers! Fear your Lord. Those who do virtuous deeds in this world shall receive a good reward in the Hereafter. And vast is God's earth. Those who persevere with fortitude shall be recompensed without measure."

O Servants of Mine who have professed faith! Vast is My earth; so adhere to My worship. (29:56)

The words إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ sound an assurance: though the path of truth is afflicted with hardships and trial; yet servants of God who persevere in these trials will be blessed with a reward well beyond their hope and imagination; today they cannot conceive of its extent.

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ (١١) وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٢)[10]

After giving glad tidings to the Muslims, these verses declare their aloofness from and severing of ties with their opponents. The Prophet (sws) is told that there is no more any need to pamper his opponents; he should clearly spell out to them that he has been directed to solely worship God alone in order to sincerely obey him and has also been directed to be the first one to profess faith in Islam irrespective of the attitude others adopt. This directive was given to the Prophet (sws) at many instances in the Qur'ān; in fact, it was given to him on the very first day of his prophethood. In the beginning of this *sūrah* as well, it is mentioned very clearly as well in the following words: إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ (٣٩: ٢-٣) (Indeed, We have revealed to you this Book with the decisive truth; so worship God alone with sincere obedience to Him only. Remember that only He is worthy of sincere obedience. (39:2-3))

Each of the two verses under discussion contains two directives: to worship God and to become the first Muslim. In other words, the Prophet (sws) has been directed towards both *imān* and *islām* and has been directed to become the first Muslim; for this reason he has embraced the yolk of obedience; it is now up to others to become his supporters or else meet their fate. It needs to be kept in mind that it is the exact requirement of a prophet's status as a prophet that he be the first to accept the *imān* and *islām* he invites others to. For this reason, his status is that of the first *mu'min* and *muslim*.

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣)[11]

The Prophet (sws) is told that he should inform them that he cannot disobey what he has been directed to do; if he does so, then he fears the

10. Say: "I have been directed to worship God with sincere obedience and I have been directed to be the first Muslim."

11. Say: "I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the torment of a fateful day."

punishment of a very tough day; they should understand that they too have been given this directive through him and that he has delivered this to them; if they continue to be defiant to God and show indifference to the punishment of the Day of Judgement, then they should do as they like; neither will he stop them nor is he responsible for their faith.

قُلِ اللَّهَ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ دِينِي (١٤) فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١٥)[12]

This in very clear words is a declaration of acquittal and severing of ties by the Prophet (sws). His proclamation is that he, according to the directive received from God, worships God alone and obey Him only and invites people to this as well; if they do not listen to him, then they are free to worship whomever they want to; he stands acquitted of them.

The Prophet (sws) is also told to inform them that the real losers are the ones who have put themselves and their family in loss on the Day of Judgement. In other words, all other losses are temporary and transient and can be compensated for; however, the loss on the Day of Judgement is eternal and everlasting; hence, unfortunate are the people who are ruining their Hereafter at the expense of a few blissful days of this world.

The addition of أَهْلِيهِمْ to أَنفُسَهُمْ is meant to point out the fact that each person is responsible not only for himself but also for his family. The following words of the Prophet (sws) explain this fact: أَلاَ كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْؤُوْلٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِه (Beware that each of you is a shepherd, and each person will be held accountable for his herd.)[13] This responsibility entails that each person should not be for worried for his own salvation but also for that his family. If a person sets a bad example for his family or through his own influence drives them to the wrong path, then he not only is responsible for his own doom but also of that of his family.

The words أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ imply that people should listen up that real loss is the one they will encounter in the Hereafter. In other words, today these people are turning a deaf ear towards this call of truth because they think that if they accept it, they will have to forsake many of their worldly interests; the fact is that this is no loss; in fact, real loss

12. Say: "God alone I worship with His sincere obedience; so you may worship others besides Him whom you want." Say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their kinsfolk in loss on the Day of Judgement. Bear in mind that this is the real loss.

13. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 412, (no. 2554).

is one whose result is eternal deprivation.

The fact mentioned in مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ دِينِي has already been explained earlier: the only acceptable worship to God is one which is also accompanied by His sincere obedience. If a person worships God but obeys the directives of others that are against God, then such worship has no weight with God. Similarly, even in obedience sincerity is essential. If God is obeyed merely to show off or because of some worldly interest, then such a hypocritical obedience too is not acceptable to God.

Here I would like to point out something regarding the recital of the word دِينِي. It should be recited the way it is in the verse لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (١٠٩: ٦) because it is established that the Prophet (sws) would pause at the end of a verse. The opinion of Sibawayah that such a suppression is specific to a couplet is not correct in my view. Several examples of such suppression are found in the Qur'ān.

لَهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِن تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللهُ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ فَاتَّقُونِ (١٦)[14]

The word ظُلَلٌ is the plural of ظُلَّةٌ. Its actual meaning is غَاشِيَةٌ (one that covers).

The verse depicts the fate of the losers mentioned in the previous verse. It is said that fire will be their bedding and fire will be there covering. Fire in various layers will enwrap them from above and from below; it is this thing with which God warns His servants of. In other words, it is not something trivial which should be dismissed by making fun of. After this it is said in a very earnest tone: "My servants! My punishment is something very severe; so protect yourselves from it."

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَن يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ (١٧) الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللهُ وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (١٨)[15]

14. For them, there shall be sheets of fire from above them and also from beneath them! It is this from which God is warning them of. O My Servants! Thus Fear Me alone."

15. And those who abstained from getting entangled in worshipping al-Tāghūt and remained devoted to God, there are glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants who listen carefully to what is said to them and follow what is the best in it. It is they whom God has guided and it is they who are men of intellect.

I have already presented the details regarding the meaning of the word طَاغُوتَ in verse 256 of Sūrah Baqarah and verse 51 of Sūrah Nisā'. It is a comprehensive word to denote anything that is anti-God whether idols, deities, devils and jinn or leaders who lead people away from the worship and obedience of God.

Here in contrast to the losers whose fate is mentioned earlier, the sincere are mentioned. They are also given glad tidings of eternal success and are also lauded for their qualities which made them worthy of these glad tidings. It is said that all those servants of God who desist from worshipping others and devote themselves to God with full sincerity should be given glad tidings; so the Prophet (sws) should deliver these glad tidings to them on behalf of God that they will be blessed with eternal success.

The words الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ depict their upright nature that made them eligible to God's guidance and glad tidings. It is said that these people instead of fighting and showing aggression to the person who presents them his views, listen carefully to him and follow every sound thing said to them.

The words أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللهُ say that the reward of their uprightness and of their attitude of loving the truth was that they valued the Qur'ān revealed by the Almighty as guidance to mankind and God blessed them with this guidance.

The words وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ point to the fact that it is these people who are men of understanding and only such people can benefit from God's reminder. This is exactly what has already been said earlier in verse nine thus: إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (only men of understanding can be reminded). In Sūrah Ṣu'ad too, it is similarly said: كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٣٨ : ٢٩) (This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that people may reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded, (38:29)).

أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ أَفَأَنتَ تُنقِذُ مَن فِي النَّارِ (١٩)[16]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that the qualities of those who receive God's guidance are the ones stated above. As for those on whom the law of God shall be implemented it is as if they have entered Hell; so does he want to deliver such people from Hell who have been seized by this punishment? The expression كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ refers to the

16. He who has become worthy of punishment [and is in Hell], will then you be able to rescue him who is in Hell.

overall verdict of God which He delivered in response to the challenge thrown by Satan. The Almighty had told him that whoever follows him from among men or jinn will be admitted to Hell together with him. In other words, this overall verdict has been given; it is absolutely certain and unalterable. Those who have become its targets will necessarily end up in Hell. Who can deliver them?

لَـٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِّن فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ (٢٠)[17]

The particle لَـٰكِنِ here is for emendation.

The word مَبْنِيَّةٌ here means "furnished". In Arabic, just as the expression بـنى الـدار means "to build a house", it also means "to furnish a house". Our exegetes have not paid attention to this second meaning; however, parallels exist of this meaning not only in the Qur'ān but also in classical Arabic. Further ahead at an appropriate place I will present its details.

The word وَعْدَ اللهِ is declined in the accusative from a suppressed verb and is meant to emphasize it.

In contrast to the punishment and torment mentioned earlier in verse sixteen for the disbelievers by words لَهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِن تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ, the reward of those who feared their Lord and abstained from polytheism is mentioned here. The verse says that there will be multi-storied buildings for them below which streams would flow. This is the firm promise of God and God never breaks His promises.

Section III: Verses (21-35)

In the succeeding verses, the reason which led the disbelievers to show indifference to the Qur'ān is attacked: it is their love for this transient life which has hardened their hearts because of which they have an aversion for the truth. Otherwise the Qur'ān is a great favour. The hairs of those who have capability stand on their ends. The stone-hearted, however, will be deprived from the Qur'ān and will face the punishment of destruction which is destined for nations of messengers that deny their respective messenger. The Qur'ān has delineated all the facts in the best

17. However, those who fear their Lord shall be lodged in embellished lofty mansions. Streams will be running below them. This is a certain promise of God. God does not break His promise.

of styles. Those who are opposing it will be taken to task. Blessed are those who are accepting this truth. It is these people who fear God and for them is the best reward.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَسَلَكَهُ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِأُوْلِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٢١) أَفَمَن شَرَحَ اللهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّن ذِكْرِ اللهِ أُوْلَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (٢٢) اللهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاء وَمَن يُضْلِلْ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٢٣) أَفَمَن يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٢٤) كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَاهُمْ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٥) فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦) وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٧) قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٢٨) ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاء مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٩) إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُم مَّيِّتُونَ (٣٠) ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ (٣١) فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَذَبَ عَلَى اللهِ وَكَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢) وَالَّذِي جَاء بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (٣٣) لَهُم مَّا يَشَاءونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ جَزَاء الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٤) لِيُكَفِّرَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٥)

Do you not see that it is God Who sends down water from the sky, and then brings forth fountains through it in the earth. Then from it produces crops of various kinds; then they dry up and you see them turn yellow. Then He crushes them to pieces. Indeed, in this is a great reminder for men of understanding,

Are they whose hearts God has opened to Islam hence are on a light from their Lord [and those who hearts are hardened be equal to one another.] So devastation is for those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! It is these people who are in manifest error. (22)

God has revealed the best of scriptures in the form of a Book uniform in style [whose *sūrahs* occur in] pairs. The hairs on of skins those who fear their Lord stand at their ends. Then their bodies and their hearts while being softened tilt towards the remembrance of God. This is God's guidance through which He guides whom He desires. And he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him. (23)

Can he who makes his face a shield to the grievous punishment [and he who is protected from it be regarded equal?] And such wrongdoers will be told: "Taste the punishment of your earning." (24)

Those before them also rejected so the punishment overtook them from where they could not have even imagined. So God made them taste humiliation in this life and the punishment of the life to come is more terrible. Would that they but knew it. (25-26)

And We mentioned in this Qur'an all kinds of parables so that they may take heed: in the form of an Arabic Qur'an free from any complexity so that they may can be protected from the punishment. God states a parable of a slave who has many masters having different objectives and another slave who is in the total ownership of one master. Can both of them be alike? Only God is worthy of gratitude; however their majority does not understand this reality. (27-29)

You are to die and they too are to die. Then, on the Day of Judgement you will present your dispute before your Lord. Then who can more wrong their souls than people who invented a falsehood about God and denied the truth when it came to them? Will not the abode of such disbelievers be in Hell? (30-32)

And he who came with the truth, and those who attested to it, these people are the ones who fear God. Their Lord will have for them all that they desire. This is the reward of people who act befittingly so that God may drive away the evil consequence of their deeds they did and befittingly reward them of their deeds they did. (35)

Explanation

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَسَلَكَهُ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِأُوْلِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٢١)[18]

This verse reminds the rejecters of the Qur'ān that the fate the Prophet (sws) is warning them of at that time seems far-fetched to them; they are

18. Do you not see that it is God Who sends down water from the sky, and then brings forth fountains through it in the earth. Then from it produces crops of various kinds; then they dry up and you see them turn yellow. Then He crushes them to pieces. Indeed, in this is a great reminder for men of understanding,

so intoxicated with their success that they cannot think from where their dominance would see its doom even though they are continuously witnessing the fact that everything of this world is temporary and mortal. Rains pours down; from it streams of water gush forth from the earth as a result; then various kinds of vegetation and crops spring forth; later they begin to dry out and become pale; then the Almighty reduces them to bits and pieces.

The word أَلْوَان also means "types". Research on this meaning of أَلْوَان has already been discussed at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

The expression هاجَ البَقَل would mean أَخَذَ فِي اليَبِس (the vegetation started to dry out).

The words إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِأُوْلِي الْأَلْبَابِ refer to the fact that there is a great lesson for men of understanding in this observation.

The greatest reminder in this observation is that all the pleasures and joys of life are absolutely temporary and transient; hence instead of being lured away from them a person of intellect should direct his attention to the Being Who brought all these things into existence and is not dependent on any thing for His existence.

The second reminder found in it is that it is the natural obligation of people to thank their Lord Who made this arrangement in this world for their sustenance and nourishment; moreover, they should not express this gratitude to others.

The third reminder found in it is that the God Who has made this arrangement and has put everything between the heavens and the earth in the active service of people will not leave them go scot-free; in fact, there must come a day in which He will hold each person accountable for his good and evil deeds and reward or punish him according to the requisites of justice.

Here these points are enough to understand the context of the discourse. Other aspects found in this example have been explained at their appropriate place and one particular aspect shall be explained in the next verse.

أَفَمَن شَرَحَ اللهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّن ذِكْرِ اللهِ أُوْلَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (٢٢)[19]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that divine

19. Are they whose hearts God has opened to Islam hence are on a light from their Lord [and those who hearts are hardened be equal to one another.] So devastation is for those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! It is these people who are in manifest error.

benefits are received in accordance with one's abilities and potentials. The mercy of God pours down on both dry and wet lands; however, all lands do not benefit from it to the same extent. Pieces of land which have the ability and potential become luxuriant and lush green and those which are barren remain in their desolate state. Similarly, the rain of the Qur'ān will also not benefit each person to the same extent: the Almighty will open the hearts of those who have managed to keep alive their natural abilities to Islam; as for those who have wasted their natural abilities and hardened their hearts will be deprived of the benefit of this rain; and doom is for such callous people who have become so hard even after God's reminders; such people are in open error. This is because not in darkness but in broad day light they lost their way in spite of the availability of God's guidance to them.

The enunciative (*khabar*) in this interrogative sentence is suppressed which I have unveiled in the translation.

The expression ذِكْرِ اللهِ إِيَّاهُمْ مِنْ تَذْكِيْرِ اللهِ actually means ie., whose hearts in spite of being reminded by God remained rock-hard.

اللهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاء وَمَن يُضْلِلْ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٢٣)[20]

The expression كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا is an attribute of the Qur'ān because every part of the Qur'ān is similar to and uniform with one another; from wherever it is opened and read, one will be reminded of all its basic teachings. Each of its groups – in fact each *sūrah* has a different style and their central themes too are different. However, in spite of this difference, there is such all-embracing uniformity in it that from whichever instance it is viewed the real majesty of the Qur'ān will become evident. The explanation I have provided with regard to the various groups of the Qur'ān is enough to prove the claim just made. The revelation of the Qur'ān in this form has a great benefit in it for the purpose of teaching. It is as if in this manner a reader is made to observe through various angles all the facts to which the Qur'ān invites its

20. God has revealed the best of scriptures in the form of a Book uniform in style [whose *sūrahs* occur in] pairs. The hairs on the skins of those who fear their Lord stand at their ends. Then their bodies and their hearts while being softened tilt towards the remembrance of God. This is God's guidance through which He guides whom He desires. And he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him.

addressees.

Research on the word مَثَانِيَ has already been presented in the explanation of verse eighty seven of Sūrah Ḥijr; this word refers to the occurrence of the Qur'ānic *sūrahs* in pairs. People who think that the word means "something which is repeated often" are mistaken and their view is against linguistic principles and parallel constructions. The significance which *sūrahs* occurring in pairs has with regard to teaching has been explained in the introduction to this *tafsīr* and under the above-mentioned verse of Sūrah Ḥijr.

The word جُلُودُ means the hair on the skin of the body as well as the body itself. It is common in Arabic to refer to the part while speaking of the whole and refer to the whole while speaking of the part.

Since the word تَلِينُ is followed by the preposition إِلَى, it encompasses the meaning of تَمِيْل (inclined to).

After these details on the words and expressions used in the verse, let us now take a look at its contents.

The Almighty says that He has revealed the best of discourses in the form of the Qur'ān each part of which is in uniformity with the other and all its *sūrahs* occur in pairs so that each of its statements is effectively entrenched in the minds of the listener and reader; from whatever aspect he may take a look, he is not eluded by the reality. Here it may be kept in mind that the state of the Torah is totally different from the Qur'ān. About the Qur'ān one can see that if after Sūrah Baqarah one recites Sūrah Al-i 'Imrān, then the central themes of both as well as their addressees, their style and their nature of arguments are different from one another. However, the various facts mentioned in Sūrah Baqarah are refreshed once again while reading Sūrah Al-i 'Imrān. On the other hand, the case of the Torah is very different. If we read Numbers after reading Leviticus, Exodus and Genesis in order there is no connection of the succeeding book with the preceding one. When the Jews lost the Torah to posterity or made changes in it a lot had to do to this disconnection of its components.

The words تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ point to the fact that such is profound effect of the Qur'ān that people who fear God that the hairs on their skins stand on their ends. If some one is not effected by this Book, then it means that his heart is devoid of God's light and has become rock-hard.

The words ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللهِ refer to the fact that the softness which the Qur'ān creates in the hearts induces their bodies and hearts to become tender and turn towards God. It is evident what the tenderness of the heart implies; what is implied by the tenderness of the

bodies is that no speck of arrogance and haughtiness remains in them. If a person has arrogance in him, then his neck and body both become stiff and he walks stamping his feet on the ground; on the other hand, people who have the fear of God in them are humble and down to earth. The affects of this humility are evident in their gait and from every gesture and motion of the body.

The demonstrative pronoun ذَلِكَ in ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاء refers to the Qur'ān. In other words, this Qur'ān is the guidance revealed by God; through it, He guided whomsoever He wanted. What is implied is that the Almighty adheres to a certain established practice regarding giving guidance. According to this practice, those who were not worthy of guidance received it from the Qur'ān and those who are not worthy of it remain deprived. I have explained this established practice of God at various instances in this *tafsīr*.

The words وَمَن يُضْلِلْ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ imply that in accordance with the above mentioned practice of God no one can guide a person who is not worthy of being guided. These words actually sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not fret over such people.

أَفَمَن يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٢٤)[21]

The enunciative (*khabar*) in this interrogative sentence also is suppressed. I have tried to unfold it in the translation.

The verse depicts the helplessness of these arrogant people: a day will come when they will see the horrible fate of arrogantly denying in this world the reward and punishment they were warned of. Such will be the terrible nature of this punishment that in order to protect themselves from it they will try to present their faces as shields. The noblest and dearest part of a person's body is his face. The first thing that he tries to protect from any calamity is his face and does not in any circumstances let harm comes its way. However, such will be the case with the punishment of the Hereafter that the arrogant will have nothing to shield themselves with from this punishment; so they would be compelled to put forth their faces as their shields – faces with which they used to show arrogance to those who warned them of it.

The word ظَالِمِينَ in وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ refers to the arrogant people under discussion. This is because by rejecting the Qur'ān they were guilty of wronging their souls. The verse states that the

21. Can he who makes his face a shield to the grievous punishment [and he who is protected from it be regarded equal?] And such wrongdoers will be told: "Taste the punishment of your earning."

Almighty will not have any mercy of this helplessness He will observe and they will be told that what has come before them is the result of their own earning; so, they should now taste it.

كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٥) فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)[22]

These verses sound a warning to the Quraysh that they should not think that the punishment with which they are being warned of is some joke. Today they are living very smoothly and hence cannot contemplate from where this punishment will land on them. Nations which preceded them also continued to deny their respective messengers because of this same malady of arrogance. At last they were seized by the torment from where they could not have even imagined it.

Consider next the words: فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا. The punishment of humiliation visited these nations because they showed arrogance before the messengers of God and denied the truth in spite of the fact that it had been conclusively communicated to them. Regarding the messengers of God, I have explained at a number of places in this *tafsīr* that there exists an established practice of God: a nation that persists in denying its messenger is necessarily destroyed by the Almighty once the truth has been conclusively conveyed to it. Together with this worldly punishment, it will also have to face another one in the Hereafter which will be much harder.

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٧) قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٢٨)[23]

The expression ضرب مثل means "to state sound advice and wisdom in the form of parables." Parables are very effective in making people understand certain facts – especially facts that relate to an unseen world. For this reason, the prophets of God use them a lot. The Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms – all are replete with parables, and name of the

22. Those before them also rejected so the punishment overtook them from where they could not have even imagined. So God made them taste humiliation in this life and the punishment of the life to come is more terrible. Would that they but knew it.

23. And We mentioned in this Qur'an all kinds of parables so that they may take heed: in the form of an Arabic Qur'an free from any complexity so that they may can be protected from the punishment.

scripture of Solomon is "Proverbs". For this reason, the idiom ضرب مثل also came to connote stating words of wisdom merely whether in the form of a parable or in the form of a general statement.

The words قُرآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ expresses an attribute of the Qur'ān which specially relates to the Arabs: the Almighty has revealed this Qur'ān in an Arabic dialect free from any complexity; it is in an eloquent tongue and in a simple yet effective way instructs people of all the important things needed for success in this world and in the Hereafter. If people do not give it due importance, then this means they disregarded the greatest favour of God and if after conclusive communication of the truth they become targets of divine punishment, they thoroughly deserve it.

The verse ends on the words لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ and the second one on لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ. In other words, the foremost objective of revealing the Qur'ān in such a thorough and elaborate manner is that those who are deep in indifference may receive a reminder. The second objective is that they save themselves from the punishment which is the essential consequence of this indifference – punishment which shall not only visit them in this world if they persist in their stubbornness but also in the next one.

ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاء مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٩)[24]

The essence of monotheism and polytheism is explained in this verse with the help of an example. A polytheist is like a slave who has many masters each having different intents and objectives and a monotheist is like a slave who has only one master. After this the question is posed: can the two be alike? The implication is that no slave will be prepared to be in the simultaneous ownership of many masters who not only have different intents but are also at war with one another. He will like to be the slave of just one master. Man's nature feels content to be a slave to one God because his needs and deficiencies cannot be fulfilled without believing in Him. The reason to believe in one God is not only found within himself but also in the world around him. As far as other gods are concerned, why should he become a slave to them if his needs are fulfilled by the one God. If a person does such a thing, then he in fact

24. God states a parable of a slave who has many masters having different objectives and another slave who is in the total ownership of one master. Can both of them be alike? Only God is worthy of gratitude; however their majority does not understand this reality.

rebels against his own nature and gets himself entangled in an imbroglio which no sane person can be ready to do so.

The words الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ are the answer given by the Almighty Himself to the question raised above: only God is worthy of being grateful to. All the favours have been given by Him; hence people should only thank Him and only worship Him and show obedience to Him alone. When He has not directed people to worship any deity as His associate, why do people out of their own desire become slaves to others?

The words بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ imply that this fact is absolutely evident; however, a majority of people do not understand it.

In the verse under discussion, a psychological argument is cited in favour of *tawḥīd* which I have explained in detail in my book, *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk o tawḥīd*. Man by his nature is someone who has great courage; he is never prepared to become the slave of anyone; He becomes a slave to one God because, as pointed out earlier, this slavery is innately found in his nature, and he because of his multifarious needs and wants cannot receive comfort and help without the support of one God. Not only is there no want in Him to become a slave of others but also there is a great revulsion for it found in his nature if it has not become distorted.

The word تَشَاكَسَ points to an important psychological fact: It means تَخَالَفَ. The expression شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَاكِسُونَ would mean associates which have conflicting objectives and which are at war with one another. It may be kept in mind that the Idolaters also believed that their deities are continuously in conflict and enmity with one another; they also feel jealous of one another. For this reason, at times they would end up fighting with one another in such a manner that this brawl lasts for ages. Now why should a person call his doom by becoming a slave to all such deities simultaneously. Human nature will never be prepared to go through this humiliation; however, an Idolater will tolerate this, which clearly shows that he is totally devoid of integrity and also deprived of the sense that he is a human being.

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُم مَّيِّتُونَ (٣٠) ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ (٣١)[25]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and his companions and a warning to their enemies: this issue of *tawḥīd* which is under discussion will one day be presented in the court of God. The Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that he is to die and his enemies too

25. You are to die and they too are to die. Then, on the Day of Judgement you will present your dispute before your Lord.

are going to die. Then both of them shall be presented in the court of God as two contestants of a case. The Prophet (sws) will be asked what he taught and communicated to them; they will be asked about the response they gave. It will be here that the final verdict will be delivered as to who is right and who is wrong. In other words, there is no need for the Prophet (sws) to feel sorrow at their frivolous talk and stubbornness. In this world, Satan has been afforded the opportunity to make hey and so his mission is thriving. It is the requirement of God's wisdom that this should go on till a certain period of time; however, one day this respite is going to end and all this matter will be presented in the court of God. On that Day, successful and dominant will be those who adhered to the truth.

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَذَبَ عَلَى اللهِ وَكَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢) وَالَّذِي جَاء بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (٣٣)[26]

These verses depict in advance the verdict which will be delivered on that day: who will be more unfortunate and wrongful to his soul than he who invented a falsehood against God, and when the Almighty revealed a truth to rectify this falsehood they denied it. Inventing falsehood against God refers to polytheism. This is because the polytheists would falsely claim about their deities that God has made them His partners whereas God has not revealed any sanction in their favour. The word الصِّدْق here refers to the Qur'ān because it has resolved all differences and presented the truth.

The conditional clause إِذْ جَاءَهُ refers to the aspect of conclusive communication of the truth: if there is an element of doubt in a truth and as a result a person is deprived of it, then he may have a legitimate excuse for this; however, if a truth stares a person in the eye and a stubborn person continues to deny it, then this would mean that he is actually denying the existence of the dazzling midday sun.

The words أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ pose the question: Should not Hell be the abode of such die-hard disbelievers? In other words, a person who has even a slight sense in him will acknowledge that Hell should be the abode of such people. Thus, this is what will happen on that day. All such disbelievers will fill the belly of Hell on that Day.

In the sentence وَالَّذِي جَاء بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ the particle مَنْ

26. Then who can more wrong their souls than people who invented a falsehood about God and denied the truth when it came to them? Will not the abode of such disbelievers be in Hell? And he who came with the truth, and those who attested to it, these people are the ones who fear God.

is suppressed before صَدَّقَ بِهِ and the word مُتَّقُونَ here refers to protection from the torment of Hell.

The above sentence mentions the reward of the other group comprising the one who brought the Qur'ān and those who attested to it: on that day, the ones who will be spared from Hell will be he who brought the Qur'ān ie., Muḥammad (sws) and those who attested to this truth. The preposition ب after صَدَّقَ indicates that these people whole-heartedly professed faith in this Book.

لَهُم مَّا يَشَاءونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ جَزَاء الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٤)[27]

This in very comprehensive words is a statement of the reward of such people: they will have everything with their Lord which they desire; no impediment will be left for their desires to be fulfilled. God will grant all their wishes. It is evident from the words عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ that the highest status a person can attain is nearness to God and not merging in His person, as understood by a group of *sūfīs*.

The words ذَلِكَ جَزَاء الْمُحْسِنِينَ sound a warning that the reward just mentioned is for those who befittingly practice religion. Not every one who claims to profess faith in the Qur'ān will deserve this fate. Only those will be worthy of this fate who besides having faith also befittingly act on the directives of religion.

لِيُكَفِّرَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٥)[28]

This verse mentions the purpose of the day of reward and punishment mentioned above: he will wipe away the evil consequences of the deeds of His servants who befittingly practice religion and bless them with a befitting reward for their deeds. It should be kept in mind that in this world a person can neither have comprehensive knowledge of the consequences of his evil deeds nor of the weight of his good deeds. This world has a very limited span and the reward and punishment discussed in this verse relates to a world whose reward is eternal and whose punishment is also eternal. That is why the words أَسْوَأَ and أَحْسَن are used in comparison. What is implied is that the Almighty has prescribed a Day of Judgement so that He may protect those of His people who adhere to faith from the consequences of the darker aspects of his deeds

27. Their Lord will have for them all that they desire. This is the reward of people who act befittingly so that

28. God may drive away the evil consequence of their deeds they did and befittingly reward them of their deeds they did.

and bless them with the noblest aspects of their deeds. In other words, this verse guides man that he should not merely consider the immediate effects and consequences of his deeds but also on those of their effects and consequences which will cast their influence on these people in the eternal life to come.

Section IV: Verses (36-52)

The succeeding verses sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should tell those people who are intimidating him through their deities that except for this Lord Who is the creator of the heavens and the earth no one can harm or give benefit to him. He should tell them to do whatever they like. The Prophet (sws) should do whatever he is doing without any inhibition; he is only responsible for his own self; he is not responsible for the belief or disbelief of others; if they are relying on their alleged intercession, then he should explain its reality to them and if they show arrogance on their worldly successes, then he should explain their transient nature to them.

Readers may now proceed the verses ahead.

Text and Translation

أَلَيْسَ اللهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٦) وَمَن يَهْدِ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن مُّضِلٍّ أَلَيْسَ اللهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انتِقَامٍ (٣٧) وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللهُ قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (٣٨) قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩) مَن يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٤٠) إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ (٤١) اللهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَى إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٢) أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللهِ شُفَعَاء قُلْ أَوَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٣) قُل لِلهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤)

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٤٥) قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٦) وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِن سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ (٤٧) وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُون (٤٨) فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٩) قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٥٠) فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاء سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٥١) أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)

Is God not all-sufficient for His servant? And they threaten you with those they have made besides Him. And he whom God leads astray has none to guide him. And he whom God guides none can lead astray. Is God not mighty and capable of revenge? (36-37)

And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will reply: "God." Say: "Do you think then that, if God intended to afflict me, these things which you worship could relieve my affliction; or that if He intended to bless me in some way, they could stop Him?" Say: "God is sufficient for me and for those who trust put their trust in Him alone." (38)

Say: "My people! Do what you wish; I will do as I wish. You shall soon learn who will be seized by a torment that will disgrace him, and who will be seized by a torment everlasting." (39-40)

And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth for the guidance of people. So he who receives guidance it will be his own good; and he who goes astray shall do so at his own peril. And you are not one who imposes on others. (41)

God alone gives death to people at the time of their demise and also to those, whose time of death has not arrived, in the state of sleep. So those about whom He has decided to give death he keeps them and others He restores for a time ordained. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect. (42)

Have they set up other intercessors besides God? Say: "Even though they have no power or understanding?" Say: "Intercession is wholly in the hands of God. He has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth.

Then to Him shall you be returned." And when only God is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in Hereafter shrink with aversion; but when others besides God are mentioned, they are delighted. Say: "Lord! Creator of the heavens and the earth, who has knowledge of the unknown and the manifest, You will give your verdict on the disputes of Your servants." (43-46)

And if those who are guilty of polytheism possessed all the treasures of the earth and as much besides, they would like to offer it to redeem themselves from the evil torment of the Day of Judgement. And from God they will be faced with something they never thought of. And the evil consequences of their deeds will come before them and they will be encompassed with that which they ridiculed. (47-48)

So when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he calls out to Us. Then We look upon Him with favour from Ourself, he says: "I acquired this through my planning." In fact, this is a trial; yet most people do not know this fact. The same was said by those before them; but their earning could not benefit them. Thus the evil consequences of their deeds came before them and those also who are guilty of polytheism the evil consequences of their deeds will soon come before them. And they can never defeat Us. Have these people not been able to know the fact that it is God Who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases? Surely, there are signs in this for those who believe. (49-52)

Explanation

أَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٦) وَمَن يَهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن مُّضِلٍّ أَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انتِقَامٍ (٣٧)[29]

These verses sound assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). The polytheists would threaten him with the wrath of their deities on his message of monotheism. They would say that if he continues to oppose them they will afflict him with some hardship. They are told that do not these naïve people think that God is sufficient to protect and give sustenance to His prophet and from the alleged danger he will be put into by their deities. God is sufficient for a person who believes in him. Without the permission of God nothing can harm him. If a person is

29. Is God not all-sufficient for His servant? And they threaten you with those they have made besides Him. And he whom God leads astray has none to guide him. And he whom God guides none can lead astray. Is God not mighty and capable of revenge?

afflicted with the fear that something can harm him without God's permission, then he thinks that God is not sufficient for his protection and sustenance and this obviously is disbelief and polytheism.

The words وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ وَمَن يَهْدِ اللهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن مُّضِلٍّ express rebuke on the ignorance of the polytheists. If these people are making such naïve and foolish statements, it is because they have brought themselves into the ambit of God's punishment because of their misdeeds; they have now become targets of God's law. For this reason, God has led them astray and those who are led astray by God can be guided by none. This is a reference to the established practice of God to which I have indicated at a number of places in this *tafsīr*. It is mentioned here to assure the Prophet (sws): he should not even care about what these arrogant people say; no one can guide such a lot.

The words أَلَيْسَ اللهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انتِقَامٍ mean that if God is not sufficient for His servants, then this would mean that He is not عَزِيزٌ (powerful); the fact is that He is عَزِيزٌ and he who is not عَزِيزٌ cannot be God. At the same time, He is also ذِي انتِقَامٍ. This means that He does not spare those who violate His rights nor forgives those who commit excesses against His servants; in fact, He takes revenge for each and every thing. The above words are in the form of a question because they refer to obvious attributes of God. One cannot imagine God without them. So when God is powerful and metes out justice and revenge, then His servants should fully trust Him; He will protect them from every danger.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللهُ قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (٣٨)[30]

The verse implies that these people are afflicted with contradictory views. On the one hand, when they are asked about the creator of the heavens and the earth they reply that it is God, and, on the other hand, they have set up partners with God and are threatening the believers through them as well. In other words, in their view, God is the creator but He is not the master and controller of the world He has created. The

30. And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will reply: "God." Say: "Do you think then that, if God intended to afflict me, these things which you worship could relieve my affliction; or that if He intended to bless me in some way, they could stop Him?" Say: "God is sufficient for me and for those who trust put their trust in Him alone."

Prophet (sws) is told to ask them that if God intends to harm him, can their alleged deities protect him; similarly, if God wants to bless him with some favour can these idols made of stones stop God from this. I have already discussed the word أَفَرَأَيْتُم at another place in this *tafsīr* and shown that when it occurs in the given context it signifies disgust and wonder on the part of the speaker.

The words قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ say that the Prophet (sws) should inform these naïve people that God is sufficient for him; neither does he fear anyone other than God nor does he have hope from anyone other than God; God looks after all his needs and for this reason he trusts God alone and all those who trust, trust God; the hopes of those who trust others will never materialize.

قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩) مَن يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٤٠)[31]

The words عَلَى مَكَانَتِي are suppressed after إِنِّي عَامِلٌ to avoid repetition. The Almighty has asked the Prophet (sws) to declare his acquittal from the disbelievers in these verses. He should tell them that if they are not willing to listen to him then they should continue doing what they are and he will stick to his ways; soon they will know who is visited by the punishment that humiliates and who is struck by the calamity that completely settles at a place. In other words, what he is communicating to them is that if they are not going to desist from their wrong attitude he will not desist from his preaching efforts; the future will tell who is disgraced who is successful; who is destroyed forever and who is kept intact by God. The punishment is qualified by the word "disgraceful" because it is in retribution to the arrogance of the opponents. The words عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ refers to that punishment which visits a nation in a manner that it takes root and totally ravishes it. I have explained at other instances of this *tafsīr* that there are two types of torments that visit a nation: one is merely to remind and admonish them; such a torment comes like a wave and goes away after sounding admonishment; another type of torment is one which totally destroys a nation; this torment is the one which visits the nation of a messenger after it deliberately denies the truth communicated to it by the messenger. For this reason, it is called عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ.

31. Say: "My people! Do what you wish; I will do as I wish. You shall soon learn who will be seized by a torment that will disgrace him, and who will be seized by a torment everlasting."

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ (٤١)[32]

After asking the Prophet (sws) to declare his acquittal, these words are meant to assure him: he has fulfilled the responsibility that was imposed on him and he need not fret over his nation now. The Almighty has revealed the Book with truth to him for the guidance of people. In other words, through this Book the Almighty has completely ascertained the truth from falsehood; people who now accept it will succeed in this world and in the next and those who reject it will only lead themselves astray; they will not harm the Prophet (sws) in any manner; he was only responsible to invite them to the truth. It is not his responsibility that he forcibly bring them to faith; he has fulfilled his responsibility; it is now their responsibility; for this reason, he should leave them to themselves.

اللّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَى إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٢)[33]

The word يَتَوَفَّاهَا is suppressed after وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ. I have expressed it in my translation.

The verse refers to the fact that life and death are completely in the hands of God. The souls of those whose life-cycle is completed are claimed by Him and those who those who still have time left are everyday made by Him to observe death and raising to life from death. When a person sleeps everyday, it is as if he is made to observe death and when he wakes up in the morning, it is as if he is made to observe life after death. Inn this manner, it is as if every person every day is made to think that he should not regard his life to be eternal; he should, in fact, keep in mind that God has given him life for a fixed period of time; his life is in the hands of God at all times and whenever He wants, that person can be given death.

The words إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ say that there are many signs in this for those who reflect.

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32. And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth for the guidance of people. So he who receives guidance it will be his own good; and he who goes astray shall do so at his own peril. And you are not one who imposes on others.

33. God alone gives death to people at the time of their demise and also to those, whose time of death has not arrived, in the state of sleep. So those about whom He has decided to give death he keeps them and others He restores for a time ordained. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect.

The first sign in this phenomenon is that just as creation and authority rests with God, similarly, life and death are also in His control. It follows from this that when no one has any say in life and death how can someone become the person to whom people return? Hence it is only God Who is worthy of being trusted; it is on Him those who trust should trust.

The second sign is that re-creation is not the slightest improbable. In this world, a person witnesses a rehearsal of life and death everyday if only he is a man of vision. The supplication which a believer recites when he wakes up in the morning is a reflection of this vision of his.[34]

The third sign in this is that this universe from its very existence is the best place for the education of facts on which rests a person's success and salvation – facts to which the Qur'ān is inviting people.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللهِ شُفَعَاء قُلْ أَوَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٣)[35]

This question expresses wonder and rebuke: have these naïve people set up intercessors for themselves besides God in spite of these clear facts and think that if God tries to seize them, these intercessors will protect them. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that would they still hope that these people would intercede for them before God even if they have no say on anything and also do not have any knowledge and cognizance. The implication is that as far as authority is concerned, no one except God has it. As far as the extent of knowledge and cognizance are concerned, here too no one has the ability to add to God's knowledge in any matter – in particular, these idols on whose intercession they are depending have no basis what to speak of they having any knowledge and cognizance.

قُل لِلهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤)[36]

The verse bids the Prophet (sws) to inform these naïve people that intercession totally rests in the hands of God; without his permission no one will dare intercede for someone. After this, whoever speaks will speak for someone about whom he is given permission; moreover,

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34. The words of this supplication are: الْحَمْدُ لِلهِ الذي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ ما أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ (gratitude be to God who raised us to life after He gave us death and to Him is the return). See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, 2326, (no. 5953),

35. Have they set up other intercessors besides God? Say: "Even though they have no power or understanding?"

36. Say: "Intercession is wholly in the hands of God. He has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. Then to Him shall you be returned."

whatever he says will be the absolute truth; no one will be able to lie before God. All the afore-mentioned conditions on intercession have been imposed by the Qur'an at various places and I have been explaining them all through. It is this which is mentioned here in a comprehensive manner. These people contend that whatever their deeds, their deities will in any case save them from God's grasp. They will see the consequence of this baseless desire on the Day of Judgement.

The words لَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ express the fact that the dominion of the heavens and the earth in under God's jurisdiction and everyone is going to come before Him alone. Neither does anyone else have any share in His dominion nor is anyone else the being to whom people will return.

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٤٥)[37]

This verse expresses one of the prominent causes of polytheism and intercession. Since in the Hereafter complete justice of God and His reward and punishment shall manifest themselves and since believing in it makes a person liable to some very heavy responsibilities, people who want to evade these responsibilities seek refuge in polytheism and intercession. They do no have the strength and courage to fulfill the consequences of their faith and deeds and also are not ready to tolerate any restriction on their base desires. For this reason, they, in the first place, do not believe in the Hereafter; and if they do, they try to protect themselves from all its dangers in their own view by inventing the creeds of polytheism and intercession. These people totally trust their alleged intercessors. For this reason, as soon as *tawḥīd* is mentioned before them, their hearts start sink because at that time the Hereafter stares them in the eye with all its dreadfulness; however, when their alleged deities and intercessors are mentioned, they breathe with satisfaction because in this situation they get a license to lead this life while disregarding the life to come. It is evident from this that the baseless doctrine of intercession is a scapegoat to evade the responsibilities of the Hereafter.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي

37. And when only God is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in Hereafter shrink with aversion; but when others besides God are mentioned, they are delighted.

مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٦)[38]

This verse urges the Prophet (sws) to supplicate for his people. It is evident from this instruction that he should consign the matter of people to God; these people are not ready to wake from their deceptive dream of living in a fool's paradise they have created and face the truth; they will live and die in this paradise; however, the Prophet (sws) should pray to the God Who has created the heavens and the earth from nothingness and Who is aware of the seen and the unseen that He should one day resolve the differences in which people are entangled today; He shall definitely bring about a day in which His perfect justice shall manifest itself. Since it is on the manifestation of perfect justice that the meaningfulness of this world depends and it is a result of this manifestation that it would be proven that God is just and wise, the Prophet (sws) is urged to make this supplication.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِن سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ (٤٧)[39]

The verse says that these Idolaters have created these subterfuges to evade the Hereafter because of their love for this world; however, when they face the horrors of the Day of Judgement, they would like that if they have whatever is in the earth and an equal more to give it in ransom for the torment and set themselves free.

The words وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ imply that in the first place a person is very generous in giving allowance to his desires; furthermore, he sees that even if he continues to perpetrate a bigger crime after another he is not taken to account for this. For this reason, he becomes totally oblivious of the Hereafter and if someone tries to direct his attention to it and makes him understand the justice and revenge of God, he regards this to be a fabrication of one's imagination; he thinks that if ever the Hereafter is going to come, how can the Almighty deal with them in the manner the Qur'ān is warning them of. This is a trial in which the majority is entangled. In order to warn such people, it is said

38. Say: "Lord! Creator of the heavens and the earth, who has knowledge of the unknown and the manifest, You will give your verdict on the disputes of Your servants."

39. And if those who are guilty of polytheism possessed all the treasures of the earth and as much besides, they would like to offer it to redeem themselves from the evil torment of the Day of Judgement. And from God they will be faced with something they never thought of.

that when the Day of Accountability arrives then what will manifest from God for these people who are dreaming such luring dreams cannot even be imagined by them today. Today they are misled by His graciousness; however, when they see the majesty of His justice and revenge their eyes will be opened and they will come to realize that God is as great in justice and revenge and as He is in His graciousness.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُون (٤٨)[40]

Similarly, a person does not clearly see the severity of his evil deeds in this world; he is not able to evaluate here the colour in which the produce of a certain evil deed or concept whose seeds he had sown started to bloom and the extent of poisonous fruits it produced. In the Hereafter, the results of all his views and deeds will manifest themselves before him in their real form, and he will see that he has been embraced from all sides by things he regarded as trivial and made fun of.

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٩)[41]

Verse eight of this *sūrah* has explained what is mentioned in this verse: man is afflicted with this strange weakness that when he is afflicted with some hardship, he pleads before God; however, once the Almighty relieves him of this hardship and blesses him with His favours, man forgets both God and the hardship he had been facing and attributes these favours to others; he says that the grace and magnanimity of such and such a person was responsible for them, as is mentioned in verse eight; or he regards these favours to be a result of his own planning and wisdom and of the marvels of science, as is referred to by the verse under discussion. In other words, he regards the source of these favours to be others except God or to his own self. Both these cases are nothing but polytheism; this is because the favour a person receives is from God alone and others are not more than means for this favour; scientific marvels and his own abilities are God's gifts. If these gifts become a source of his success then they do so because of God's permission.

The words بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ express the fact that none of

40. And the evil consequences of their deeds will come before them and they will be encompassed with that which they ridiculed.

41. So when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he calls out to Us. Then We look upon Him with favour from Ourself, he says: "I acquired this through my planning." In fact, this is a trial; yet most people do not know this fact.

the favours given to a person is from anyone other than God or the result of his own abilities or because he deserves it; he receives all these favours from God and through them He actually tries and tests His servants whether they show gratitude to Him or show arrogance and haughtiness. However, the majority of people is not aware of this fact and this leads them to polytheism and anarchy. This fact is very clearly stated in Sūrah Qaṣaṣ where the character of Qārūn is portrayed:

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِن قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِن كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عِندِي أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِن قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا (٢٨: ٧٦– ٧٨)

Korah belonged to the people of Moses, but he behaved rebelliously with them. And We gave him so many treasures that their keys could only be lifted by a group of powerful men. Remember the time when his people said to him: "Do not show conceit; God does not like the conceited. But seek the abode of the Hereafter with whatever God has bestowed on you, and forget not your share in this world and do good as God has been good to you, and seek not anarchy in the land. God does not like the anarchists." He replied: "I have obtained this wealth because of my the knowledge I possess." Does he not know that God has destroyed many nations before him who were stronger than him in might and greater in number. (28: 76-78)

قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٥٠)[42]

The verse expresses the fact that before the arrogant leaders of the Qurash this statement ie., إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ (٣٩: ٤٩) (I acquired this through my planning, (39:49)) was made by previous nations as well; one of them was Qārūn (Korah). It is said that whoever was afflicted with this conceited notion could not benefit from the knowledge they had obtained through their abilities and through science when God decided to seize them. Thus Qur'ān itself has cited the example of

42. The same was said by those before them; but their earning could not benefit them. Thus the evil consequences of their deeds came before them

Korah: he regarded himself to be an expert in trade and financial matters but God sunk him and all his treasures in the earth and at that time none of his strategies could be of any avail to him.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاء سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٥١)[43]

The verse says that evil consequence of the deeds of people who were obsessed by this conceited notion came before them. In other words, those among the Quraysh who were guilty of this oppression they will soon face the results of their evil deeds and what they earned in an evil way and when God will seize them, they will not be able to escape from His grasp.

أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)[44]

What is said in the above verse has already been discussed in verse 27 of Sūrah Rūm. The only difference is that there the words are: أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا and here the words are: أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا. In other words, if a person has vision and insight and also uses his intellect, then he cannot be in doubt that sustenance and blessings relate to man's planning and authority; on the contrary, all of it is based on God's wisdom and will. It is He Who gives it in large quantities to whomsoever He wills and small quantities to whomsoever He wills. There are so many people who are born with a silver spoon in their mouths without any effort or struggle and so many who struggle very hard in this world and also have the knowledge to earn worldly gains; however, they are able to earn only that amount which God has ordained for them. This also is a common observation that today a person is a millionaire or a billionaire and possesses great power and authority; however, the very next day he goes bankrupt or ends up in jail. If, in spite of these observations all around him, a person is arrogant enough to believer that it is his own knowledge and planning that have been responsible for his status and wealth (إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ), then it must be conceded that there is something wrong with his senses.

The words إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ refer to the fact that those who

43. and those also who are guilty of polytheism the evil consequences of their deeds will soon come before them. And they can never defeat Us.

44. Have these people not been able to know the fact that it is God Who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases? Surely, there are signs in this for those who believe.

observe the way God gives abundantly to some and stringently to others will be able to see many realities about God's attributes. For example:

– The sovereignty of this universe lies in the hands of God. It is in His power alone to give people and in His power alone to take away from people. No one shares this authority with Him. Hence a person must always repose his trust in Him.

– All the works of God are governed by His mercy and wisdom. If He gives abundantly to some people in this world, then this is based on His wisdom and if He gives stringently to some people in this world, then this too is based on His wisdom. He intends to test those to whom He gives abundantly whether they express gratitude to Him or not and see whether those to whom He gives less show patience or not; it will be on the Day of Judgement when the verdict of success or failure about people will be passed in this regard.

– This world is a place of trial and not a place of reward; every person is being tested here and in order that the results of this trial manifest themselves, it is essential that the Day of Judgement come about.

The verb in لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ, in my opinion, is meant to express intention. Many examples of such usage of verbs have been seen in previous *sūrahs*. It is a fact that it is generally not because the truth is not evident to man that he strays into error in this world but more because he the truth is evident to him yet he is not ready to accept it. There are a number of reasons for this – the details of which have been discussed in the explanation of earlier *sūrahs*.

Section V: Verses (53-63)

In the verses coming up, the Idolaters are warned that the back door they have opened to polytheism and intercession will not be able to save them; on the contrary, they will only facilitate their destruction. The path to success hinges on focussing attention towards God with sincerity of heart and on following this best of Books which has been revealed by Him for their guidance. Otherwise, they should remember that very soon the time will come when they will lament and regret their foolishness but at that time this will be of no use to them. Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللهِ إِنَّ اللهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ

جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٣) وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (٥٤) وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ العَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٥٥) أَن تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَى عَلَى مَا فَرَّطتُ فِي جَنبِ اللهِ وَإِن كُنتُ لَمِنَ السَّاخِرِينَ (٥٦) أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٥٧) أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَى الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي كَرَّةً فَأَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨) بَلَى قَدْ جَاءتْكَ آيَاتِي فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٩) وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُواْ عَلَى اللهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٦٠) وَيُنَجِّي اللهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦١) اللهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (٦٢) لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللهِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٦٣)

Say: "O My Servants who have sinned against their souls, do not despair of God's mercy. God will forgive all sins. He is very Forgiving and Merciful. And turn to your Lord, and submit to Him before the torment visits you; for then you will not be helped. (53-54)

And follow the best thing that has been revealed to you by your Lord before the torment suddenly overtakes you when you are heedless. Lest any person should say: "What a pity on my blemish regarding God and indeed I was among those who would make fun." Or someone says: "If God had guided me I too would have been among those who fear." Or someone says when he sees the torment: "Could I but live again, I would be among those who are befitting in their deeds." – Yes, indeed. My revelations did come to you; but you denied them and showed arrogance and remained among the disbelievers. (55-59)

And on the Day of Judgdment you shall see their faces blackened who uttered falsehoods about God. Is there not in Hell a home for these haughty? And God will deliver those who feared Him in their place of peace. Harm shall not touch them nor shall they ever grieve. God is the Creator of all things, and of all things He is the Guardian. In this possession are the keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who denied God's revelations will surely be the losers. (60-63)

Explanation

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللهِ إِنَّ اللهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ

جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٣)[45]

One of the biggest factors leading to polytheism and innovation is a person loosing hope in God and in having bad estimations about him. I have explained a number of aspects of this state of hopelessness and harbouring bad estimations about God at various places of this *tafsīr*. Among them is also the factor that a polytheist does not have trust in God's mercy and forgiveness. For this reason, he according to his imagination fashions out some hypothetical deities who are favoured ones of God; by worshipping them, he hopes that they will intercede for him before God and secure his forgiveness from Him. Those who are inflicted with this false notion are informed by God through Muḥammad (sws) that they who have wronged their souls by sinning and by indulging in polytheism should not seek the support of others and lose hope in God's mercy. They should seek forgiveness from Him alone. He is very forgiving and merciful. He forgives the sins of those of His servants who turn to Him with sincerity.

The style and tone of this verse bears testimony to the fact that the addressees are in fact those people who are under the misconception that neither can every person access God nor does God regard the petition of every person to be worthy of acceptance. Because of this misconception, these people seek the support of others even though such a view about God is tantamount to losing hope in Him and having a bad estimation about Him – something which is not allowed in any circumstances.

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (٥٤)[46]

The verse guides a person to the way which should be adopted by those who seek God's mercy and forgiveness. It says that a person should totally turn to God while severing ties from other means and supports, repent for his sins, seek his mercy and forgiveness and before the torment of God manifests itself should consign himself to Him. In other words, he should worship and obey God alone.

The words مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ can refer to the torment of Hereafter; however, contextual indication shows that it refers to the torment which visits the direct addressees of a messenger who deny him once he conclusively communicates the truth to them. After the advent of this torment, neither does the option of professing faith for someone

45. Say: "O My Servants who have sinned against their souls, do not despair of God's mercy. God will forgive all sins. He is very Forgiving and Merciful.

46. And turn to your Lord, and submit to Him before the torment visits you; for then you will not be helped.

remains nor are such people helped. The implication is that these people should not become desirous of this torment; if they want their well-being, they should repent and mend their ways before it arrives.

وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ العَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٥٥)[47]

This verse further explains the subject discussed in the previous verse: the right attitude for them is to follow the best thing which has been revealed to them by their Lord. The "best thing" obviously refers to the Qur'ān which has been alluded to as أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ (the best word) in verse twenty three of this *sūrah*. The edge Qur'ān has over other divine scriptures has been explained at a number of instances in this *tafsīr*. Thus for example:

– The Qur'ān is the final and most complete Book of God.

– It is secure from any fragment of alteration.

– It invites people to the natural religion and hence is free of the stern and harsh directives of the previous scriptures.

With specific reference to the Arabs as well, it has some aspects worthy of attention:

– It is in very eloquent and lucid Arabic the very likes of which others are not able to produce and it is a great favour of the Almighty to the Arabs that He revealed His last Book in Arabic.

– This Book was revealed as *mutashābih* and *mathānī* as a result of which its benefit doubled with respect to other divine books. For an explanation of this, verse twenty three of this *sūrah* can be cosulted.

– This Book invites people to the religion of the great forefather of the Arabs: Abraham (sws). For this reason, its message is something known to the Arabs.

In other words, the verse under discussion says that it is the requisite of all these characteristics of the Book that people should whole-heartedly welcome it and absorb it in their minds. If they do not give it due importance, they should remember that if they deny it they will be visited by a torment that they cannot even imagine.

أَن تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَى عَلَى مَا فَرَّطتُ فِي جَنبِ اللهِ وَإِن كُنتُ لَمِنَ السَّاخِرِينَ (٥٦)[48]

47. And follow the best thing that has been revealed to you by your Lord before the torment suddenly overtakes you when you are heedless.

48. Lest any person should say: "What a pity on my blemish regarding God and indeed I was among those who would make fun."

A governing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed before the word أَن. Examples of such suppression have been pointed out in previous *sūrahs*. The implication is that the Almighty had made all these elaborate arrangements lest the time of accountability arrives and those who are indifferent to it end up yearning about the wrong attitude they had adopted regarding God: lured away by the absorbing pleasures of this world they continued to remain oblivious of the Hereafter and went a step ahead in this cruel behaviour by making fun of those who would remind them of it.

أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٥٧)[49]

Or they present the excuse that had God given them guidance, they would have been among those who feared Him. The implication is that to thwart such excuses the Almighty has revealed His guidance. Now those who evade it will be fully responsible for their departure from guidance.

أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَى الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي كَرَّةً فَأَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨)[50]

Or after observing the torment will express the desire and yearning of being given a chance to go back in the previous world so that they could become among those grateful to God.

بَلَى قَدْ جَاءتْكَ آيَاتِي فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٩)[51]

This is an answer to the excuse mentioned in verse fifty seven: on that day, people who present such an excuse will be told that God did reveal His verses to them for their guidance; but they rejected them, showed arrogance and remained among the disbelievers. In other words, if this is not the way of God that He force down His guidance in the hearts of people; He makes arrangement to guide people by teaching them, and then leaves it to their discretion whether they accept it or not. Now God has done this; but because of their arrogance they have not given it due importance.

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49. Or someone says: "If God had guided me I too would have been among those who fear."

50. Or someone says when he sees the torment: "Could I but live again, I would be among those who are befitting in their deeds."

51. – Yes, indeed. My revelations did come to you; but you denied them and showed arrogance and remained among the disbelievers.

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُواْ عَلَى اللهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٦٠)[52]

The words كَذَبُواْ عَلَى اللهِ allude to polytheism. I have already explained this. What is implied is that when those who impute falsehood to God by saying that He has made such and such a being His partner were rebuked that God has no partners, then without any justification merely on the basis of arrogance they insisted on this claim. On the Day of Judgement, the faces of such people will be blackened because of their arrogance.

The words أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ impose a question: Will not Hell be the abode of such arrogant people? The implication is that the fact that such haughty people are worthy of Hell is such a clear one that there is no possibility of any difference of opinion in this for anyone. Thus all such arrogant people will be cast into Hell.

وَيُنَجِّي اللهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦١)[53]

In contrast to the fate of the disbelievers, this verse states the reward of those people who remained fearful of God. The verse says that the Almighty will grant those devoid of arrogance a place in their abode of peace. The ب in the word بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ indicates the locus and the word مَفْلَح and مَأمَنْ means which refers to Paradise. The implication is that on that day of horror, these people will be transported to such abodes where neither will they be harmed nor will they be grieved. They will be secure from all the regrets of the past and fears of the future.

اللهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (٦٢) لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللهِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٦٣)[54]

These verses present a summary of the whole previous discussion: God is the Creator of everything and He is not left attending to this world after creating it; in fact, He is the protector of all and for this reason all His people should trust Him; the keys of all the treasures of

52. And on the Day of Judgdment you shall see their faces blackened who uttered falsehoods about God. Is there not in Hell a home for these haughty?

53. And God will deliver those who feared Him in their place of peace. Harm shall not touch them nor shall they ever grieve.

54. God is the Creator of all things, and of all things He is the Guardian. In this possession are the keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who denied God's revelations will surely be the losers.

the heavens and the earth are with Him; whatever people obtain from the heavens and the earth is His blessing and in the Hereafter too whatever they get will be from among His favours; those who have rejected the revelations of God and became adamant on their polytheism will certainly end up in loss; they themselves will face the evil consequences of this foolishness – no one else.

Section VI: Verses (64-75)

Coming up are the closing verses of this *sūrah*. First, the Prophet (sws) is directed to address these foolish people and inquire from them why they ask him to worship others besides God in spite of all these clear facts; why do they do this in spite of the fact that the Almighty has sent this same revelation to people that the deeds of those who associate partners with God will go waste. After this, it is explained that these ignorant people have not understood at all the majesty of God: they are associating such things with the divinity of God which are baseless and on their basis have no fear of the Hereafter. Such is the grandeur of God that one day He will roll up the heavens and the earth in His hand and when His trumpet is sounded everyone in the heavens and the earth will become unconscious; when the trumpet will be sounded a second time everyone will rise and the earth will light up with the radiance of God. At that time, the register of accounts of people will be laid open; prophets and witnesses will be called forth and the fate of people will be decided with fill justice. After this, the details of the fate met by the companions of Paradise and those of Hell are presented so that the eyes of those who are having sweet dreams are opened.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

قُلْ أَفَغَيْرَ اللهِ تَأْمُرُونِّي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا الْجَاهِلُونَ (٦٤) وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٥) بَلِ اللهَ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنْ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٦٦) وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّماوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٧) وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاء اللهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُم قِيَامٌ يَنظُرُونَ (٦٨) وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاء

وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٩) وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٠) وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاء يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا بَلَى وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧١) قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٢) وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣) وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاء فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (٧٤) وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٥)

Say: "O Foolish People! In spite of this, do you bid me worship a deity other than God," even though it has been revealed to you and to those before you that if you indulge in polytheism your deeds will go waste and you will be among the losers. In fact, worship God only and show gratitude to Him alone. (65-66)

And these people did not give due importance to God. On the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens also will be folded in His hand. Glorious and exalted is He above the things they associate with Him. And when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and on earth shall fall down unconscious except those who shall be spared by God. Then when the trumpet is blown again, they shall suddenly rise and gaze around them. And the earth will shine with the radiance of her Lord, and the register will be laid open and the prophets and the witnesses shall be called forth, and all shall be judged with fairness and none shall be wronged. And every soul shall be recompensed according to its deeds. And He well knows what they have been doing. (67-70)

And in throngs the disbelievers shall be led to Hell. Until when they draw near, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will ask them: "Did there not come to you messengers from among you who proclaimed to you the revelations of your Lord and forewarned you of the meeting this day?" They will reply: "Yes," but the promise of torment for the disbelievers will be fulfilled. It shall be said to them: "Enter the gates of Hell to stay there forever." Thus what an evil abode is that of the haughty. (71-72)

And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near it and its gates will be opened, and its keepers

will say to them: "Peace be to you! Be happy; enter it forever." And they will say: "Gratitude be to God who has fulfilled His promise made with us and made us inherit the earth; we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please." So how wonderful is the reward of the righteous. (73-74)

And you shall see the angels encircling the throne of God, giving glory to their Lord while expressing praise for Him. And people shall be judged with fairness, and it shall be said: "God, Lord of the Universe, is worthy of gratitude." (75)

Explanation

قُلْ أَفَغَيْرَ اللهِ تَأْمُرُونِّي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا الْجَاهِلُونَ (٦٤)[55]

The word جاهِلُ refers to a person who instead of using his knowledge and intellect is led by emotions and desires. The verse directs the Prophet (sws) to ask such people that when all testimonies are in favour of God being the Creator of everything and in His control are the keys of all the heavens and the earth, then will these people still try to insist upon him to worship others besides God. It has been mentioned earlier that the Idolaters would try to strike the fear of their Idols in the heart of the Prophet (sws) by saying that if he does not stop opposing his ancestral religion he will face their wrath. It is to this statement of theirs that this verse refers to and poses the question in the style of an acquittal that even after these clear facts would they keep demanding from him to worship their idols.

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٥) بَلِ اللهَ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنْ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٦٦)[56]

This verse answers these foolish people and since what they were saying was absolutely absurd, they are not regarded as worthy of being addressed directly; instead, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and these people are indirectly conveyed the message which the verse states. The Prophet (sws) is told that these foolish and ignorant people are insisting upon him to embrace polytheism even though God has revealed to him and to earlier prophets that indulging in polytheism will ruin all their deeds and they will end up among the losers. The only path to success is

55. Say: "O Foolish People! In spite of this, do you bid me worship a deity other than God,"

56. Even though it has been revealed to you and to those before you that if you indulge in polytheism your deeds will go waste and you will be among the losers. In fact, worship God only and show gratitude to Him alone.

worshipping God and showing gratitude to Him.

The expression means that with polytheism whatever deeds are done even for God go waste and do not bear any fruit. He accepts the good deeds of only those of His servants who do not set up partners with God.

The words بَلِ اللهَ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنْ الشَّاكِرِينَ point to the fact that the obligation a person owes to God with regard to showing gratitude to Him is fulfilled only when He worships God alone. If He associates others with God in this worship, then he cannot be considered as someone who is grateful to God, and the whole edifice of his religiosity is razed to the ground.

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّماوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٧)[57]

The verse implies that if these foolish people have set up partners with God, then this is because they have not appreciated the true majesty and exaltedness of God. They have measured God with their limited scales. For this reason, they have not been able to distinguish between a ray of light and the sun, between a drop of water and the ocean. The fact is that on the Day of Judgedment this whole earth will be in God's grasp like a handful of sand and all the heavens too will be folded up in His hands. What association can these deities have with such a mighty being so that they be regarded as His partners in administering this universe and He becomes dependent on their help.

The word قبضة refers to that quantity of a thing which is picked up as a handful.

The words سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ imply that the person of God is exalted and beyond the partners these foolish people associate with Him. Such associations are not only against His holiness but also His exaltedness.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاء اللهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُم قِيَامٌ يَنظُرُونَ (٦٨)[58]

57. And these people did not give due importance to God. On the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens also will be folded in His hand. Glorious and exalted is He above the things they associate with Him.

58. And when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and on earth shall fall down unconscious except those who shall be spared by God. Then when the trumpet is blown again, they shall suddenly rise and gaze around

Further details are furnished here about the belief of the Idolaters regarding their deities. They reckoned that these deities are very close to God and would win such and such things for their worshippers, and if God tries to seize them, these deities would protect them because of the influence they wielded on God. The fact of the matter is that on the Day of Judgement when the trumpet is sounded for the first time, every creature on earth will fall down unconscious; only they will be secure from this who God wants to protect. Then when the trumpet is sounded for a second time, everyone will rise up and look here and there in amazement. What is implied is that when such is the horror of this day, then who can dare try to advocate and intercede for someone before God by cajoling Him; similarly, who can claim to be a peer of the God whose might is such that one sound of His trumpet can knock off people unconscious and another sound bring them back to consciousness?

It is evident from the words إِلَّا مَن شَاء اللهُ that there will be some people who on that day will be secure from falling unconscious. Who will be these people? It is difficult to give a definite answer to this question. However, it is evident from the succeeding verses that angels who would be glorifying and extolling God around His throne will be the ones who will not be effected by the trumpet sound. This is merely a hint. I am not fully confident in this opinion. I will try to direct attention of our readers to certain insinuations in this regard while explaining the verse.

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاء وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٩)[59]

The earth referred to here is the one which will come into existence on the Day of Judgement with new laws. The verse: يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الأَرْضِ (٤٨:١٤) (keep in mind the day when the earth is changed into a different earth, (14:48)) refers to this earth. Our earth is lit up because of receiving light from the sun; for this reason our observation is limited to what can be felt and seen; however, that earth will be lit up by the light of God; hence, many more facts and details will come before people. The nature of this light is not explained here. The reason is that our language does not have the words to express its nature and type. However, the Qur'ān has specified its effects at many instances. Thus

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them.

59. And the earth will shine with the radiance of her Lord, and the register will be laid open and the prophets and the witnesses shall be called forth, and all shall be judged with fairness and none shall be wronged.

for example it is stated in Sūrah Qāf: لَقَدْ كُنتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطَاءكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ (٥٠: ٢٢)(You remained heedless of this day, so We have removed the veil before you. So sharp is your eyesight today. (50:22) It is evident from this verse that today what eyes do not have the power to observe will become observable in the earth which will later come to being. Similarly, at another place, it is stated: وَأَخْرَجَتْ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا (٩٩: ٢-٥) بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَى لَهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا وَقَالَ الْإِنسَانُ مَا لَهَا (And it casts forth all its burdens. And man cries out: "What is the matter with her?" On that Day, she will narrate all her story at the intimation of your Lord, (99:2-5)). Though these facts are not hidden even today from men of insight but those whose eyes are covered cannot see them; however, on that Day, these facts will light up from the radiance of God is such a manner that these people who today have become blind and deaf will also see them.

The words وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاء وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَايُظْلَمُونَ refer to the affects of the appearance of God's light and radiance: the reward and punishment with which people are being warned of and they are not willing to accept it will readily manifest themselves on that Day. All veils will be lifted. The book will be placed in front. Contextual indication shows that it refers to the register of accounts of people. At other instances in the Qur'ān, calling forth of prophets and witnesses is discussed in detail. The Almighty will ask the prophets to bear witness to what they taught their people and what was their response. Details are mentioned in Sūrah Mā'idah. The word "witnesses" connotes generality and vastness. In other words, those people shall also be called forth who will be in a position to bear witness in some matter whether they are from among human beings or from among the angels. Since by status this *ummah* is شهداء الله في الأرض (God's witnesses on earth) hence the reformers and the righteous will also be summoned and they will be asked what they taught and told people and what their response was. After this testimony is presented once people are called forth, the account of each person will be judged with fairness and not the slightest of injustice will be done to anyone.

وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٠)[60]

This verse explains what is said in the previous one by the words: وَهُمْ لَايُظْلَمُونَ (and none shall be wronged): each person shall reap what he

60. And every soul shall be recompensed according to its deeds. And He well knows what they have been doing.

sowed and what he will receive will be fully commensurate with his deeds. Thus there is no question of any injustice. Each person will reap the harvest of the crop he cultivated and taste the fruit of the tree he planted.

The words وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ refer to the fact that there is no possibility that God will forget any deed of a person; He is fully aware of what people are doing and everything is clearly written down in His register.

The purpose of all these details is to open the eyes of the Idolaters so that they realize how baseless are their desires and what the actual reality they will encounter is.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاء يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا بَلَى وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧١)[61]

The words الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا refer to the Idolaters who are under discussion. I have indicated at an appropriate place that polytheism (*shirk*) is disbelief (*kufr*). Only that belief in God is considerable to Him which is based on pure monotheism. If it is contaminated with polytheism, then it becomes disbelief.

The verse describes the consequences of the witnesses that were borne in the court of God: once these testimonies end all those guilty of disbelief will be led to Hell. Once they come near it, its gates will be opened. At another instance in the Qur'ān it is specified that Hell has seven gates and the throngs that will enter each of these gates will be categorized according to their sins.

The words وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاء يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا بَلَى وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ state that when the keepers of Hell see these wretched people, they will rebuke them on seeing their horrible fate and ask them whether messengers of God came to them to inform them of the horrors of this Day. In reply, these people will confess their crime and say that messengers did come to them yet it was their wretched response that made God send His promised punishment on them – the disbelievers.

61. And in throngs the disbelievers shall be led to Hell. Until when they draw near, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will ask them: "Did there not come to you messengers from among you who proclaimed to you the revelations of your Lord and forewarned you of the meeting this day?" They will reply: "Yes," but the promise of torment for the disbelievers will be fulfilled.

The expression كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ, as is explained at an appropriate place, refers to the total decision of God which He pronounced before Satan in response to the latter's challenge. The Almighty had declared that whoever follows Satan will end up in Hell together with him. Here only God's decision is referred to. At another instance in the Qur'ān, it is stated that these people will clearly confess their crime. Thus the words of Sūrah Mulk are: كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ قَالُوا بَلَى قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٦٧: ٨–١٠)(Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?" They will say: "A warner did come but we rejected him and said: 'God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.'" And they will say: "If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell." (67:8-10)

قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٢)[62]

After these disbelievers utter their reply referred to above, they will be told to enter the gates of Hell and this entry is forever.

In the words فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ the people connoted by the word الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ are obviously the ones which are under discussion. This adjective sheds light on the real reason of their evasion and rejection: it is out of sheer arrogance that they evaded the truth and became worthy of this abode which has been specially reserved for the arrogant.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣)[63]

The word سوق means to lead or drive something to something. It is used both in the positive and the negative sense. When conducive winds drive the clouds of mercy to gardens and orchards, then this word is used in its positive sense. Similarly, when the companions of Hell are driven to Hell, then this word is used in its negative sense here, as is the case with the preceding verse. In the verse under discussion, it is used in its positive sense. This is because in front of them and behind the righteous

62. It shall be said to them: "Enter the gates of Hell to stay there forever." Thus what an evil abode is that of the haughty.

63. And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near it and its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say to them: "Peace be to you! Be happy; enter it forever."

as well as on their left and right there will be angels of God who in their company and custody will take them to Paradise.

The answer to the conditional clause in this verse is suppressed. A similar example of such suppression can be seen in verses 103-105 of Sūrah Ṣāffāt. While explaining those verses, I have tried to explain the eloquence and occasion of this suppression. At times, such is the nature of the answer of a conditional clause or sentence that words are unable to express it. On such occasions, it is suppressed:

خموشي معنئ دارد كه در گفتن نمي آيد

(Silence has meanings which speech cannot express)

طِبْتُمْ is a word of welcome. It is like saying: "May you always be happy! May you always live in happiness and comfort! May you prosper and grow!"

The words الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا are used in contrast to الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا. It is evident from these words that since these people feared God they were never inflicted with arrogance; in fact, they listened to and accepted what the messengers of God called them to. The verse says that such people will be led to Paradise in the company of the angels until when its gates are opened to them and its keepers welcome them with salutations … At that time, what they will acquire cannot be imagined by anyone today. At another place, the Qur'ān has used the words:فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ (١٧:٣٢) (Then no one knows what bliss has been kept hidden for him. (32:17)).

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاء فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (٧٤)[64]

The word land (أَرْض) here refers to the land of Paradise which is mentioned earlier in verse 69. In this verse, it is specified that the land is the land of Paradise. When the dwellers of Paradise will see that the promises made by God through his prophets and messengers have been fulfilled one by one, then their tongues will spontaneously thank God. They will say that they are thankful to God Who fulfilled all His promises and made them the inheritors of the land of Paradise where they can move about wherever they want to. There is a subtle reference in the words

64. And they will say: "Gratitude be to God who has fulfilled His promise made with us and made us inherit the earth; we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please." So how wonderful is the reward of the righteous.

"made them the inheritors" that this Paradise was given to Adam (sws) their father; however, Satan deprived him of it by luring him away; to regain it, the Almighty imposed the condition that the progeny of Adam should go into the world and fight against Satan; then those who win this battle will become inheritors of this Paradise. In other words, these people of Paradise will express their gratitude that they have been successful in this test and they have regained the Paradise lost by their father.

Consider next the part: نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاء. it is mentioned earlier on that the dwellers of Paradise will have whatever they want. It is now said that will full liberty and authority they will move around in Paradise wherever they want to. It is evident from this that in Paradise nothing will impede the desires and intentions of a person to materialize. This is an abode which cannot be imagined of in this world. Its reality will only be understood when this new world will appear with its new laws and mankind also appears in it with new strengths and abilities, and this new earth will shine with the radiance of its Lord instead of that of the sun.

The part فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ occurs in exact contrast to فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ of verse seventy two. A requirement of this contrast was that here words like خَاشِعِيْن or مُتَّقِيْن or similar ones be used; however, this would have merely fulfilled the requirement of contrast; there would not have been much addition in meaning. Use of the word عَامِلِين has added the meaning that the real thing that is instrumental in taking a person to Paradise is his deeds. Those who are dreaming to go to Paradise on the basis of some hypothetical intercession are living in a fool's paradise.

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٥)[65]

Contextual indication shows that this verse is adjacent to verse sixty nine and the angels mentioned are the ones which carry the throne of the Almighty and other near ones of this category, as is evident from the words حَافِّينَ and حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ. In Sūrah Mu'min, the next *sūrah*, they are mentioned thus: الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (٤٠: ٧) (Those who bear the Throne and those who stand around it give glory to their Lord while celebrating His praises and

65. And you shall see the angels encircling the throne of God, giving glory to their Lord while expressing praise for Him. And people shall be judged with fairness, and it shall be said: "God, Lord of the Universe, is worthy of gratitude."

believe in Him. And they implore forgiveness for those who have embraced faith, saying: "Lord, Your mercy and your knowledge embrace all things; so forgive those who repent and follow Your path and shield them from the punishment of Hell." (40:7)

This is a mention of the state of the angels on the day witnesses will be presented in this divine court. The purpose of this mention is that it becomes evident to the Idolaters – who solely depend on the intercession of the angels – that because of the horror of that day they too would be very anxious and gathered around the throne of the Almighty busy extolling Him. It should remain clear that this is the state of the angels who bear the throne of God; what then will be the state of other angels who are not as lofty in status as these angels. In other words, on that day when the loftiest of angels would only be thinking of their own self, how will they have time to intercede for others.

The words وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ imply that the cases of people will be decided with complete justice and truth; neither will there be any opportunity for anyone to intervene and intercede for someone nor will anyone dare intervene in this matter.

Once God's mercy and justice manifest themselves in a perfect manner, the cry of الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Only God, Lord of the worlds, is worthy of praise and gratitude) will resound from every nook and corner. The believers will chant this cry and the angels of the throne will also join the believers in this chanting.

It is evident from this that what makes God worthy of praise and gratitude is His justice and His discernment of truth and falsehood. If this does not exist, then this world is a place where evil reigns supreme and people are not called to account for it. If this is the case of this world, then no one can regard its creator to be worthy of praise and gratitude. When on the Day of Judgement the perfect mercy and perfect justice manifest themselves, then the anxiety and doubt of everyone will be appeased and every part of the universe will reverberate with cries of His praise and gratitude. In other words, the dawn of praise and gratitude which people awaited will appear and this new world will dazzle with the light of God.

This brings me to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (so only God, Lord of the worlds, is worthy of praise and gratitude).

Raḥmānābād
24th June 1975 AD